Where the Sugar Maple Grows

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WHERE THE SUGAR MAPLE GROWS ¶ ¶ ¶

Idylls of a Canadian Village

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THREE OF THE WOMEN.

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WHERE THE SUGAR MAPLE GROWS.

THE GLAD SOUL.

SHRUNKEN little figure below the medium height, attired in a plain black gown, guiltless of frill or pucker, a thin black shawl draping the narrow shoulders, and crowning all a bonnet, something after the Shaker style, covered neatly with black silk: this was all I saw, for I had only a profile view, and the bonnet completely hid her face.

"Some commonplace little body with prudish ideas about dress," I meditated indifferently, "and these ideas not her own, but inherited."

Later on coming out of church I saw her again.

I was walking down the aisle from one of the front seats, and she was seated in a back pew. There were several other women beside her, and I gave a casual glance at them all and looked away, but I looked back quickly, for I could see right into the black bonnet now, and into the face of its wearer. Such a face!—so white—so pure—so glad! I had heard of saintly faces, but this did not impress me so much as that of a saint, which might imply suffering, as that of a glad soul.

It must have been an old face on so shrunken a figure, yet I observed no wrinkles, no marks, nor scars of time on my first glance, nothing but the glad soul looking out.

I had traveled far and seen the beauties of many lands, I had been thrilled by feminine faces of sweet seventeen, and sweeter seventy, there had crossed my path "faces so fluid with expression, so flushed and rippled by the play of thought," that I could hardly find what the mere features really were; but this was the most joyous face that ever greeted my eyes. Who could the woman be?

Immediately I set to work to find out, and before leaving the church I learned that she

had come to make her home with a married daughter who lived on a farm at the edge of the village, about a mile from the church.

Somehow that glad soul had a fascination for me, and I found myself Sunday after Sunday watching for her. I was acquainted with most of the inhabitants of the village, and I knew she was not among their number when I left it some months before to escape the rigors of a Canadian winter.

I always came back, after journeyings in other lands among strangers and foreigners, to my summer home in law-abiding Canada, where righteousness seemed to have the upper hand, as to a Sabbath rest. I returned with the regularity of the robin and the blue-bird, and with the same feeling of coming home which they manifest by building their nests and raising their fledglings in the bosom of "Our lady of the Sunshine."

Mapleton, situated in the fairest part of the rich province of Ontario, was a typical Canadian village.

Walking through our quiet streets you might hear the rich Irish brogue, the broad Scotch burr, the deep German guttural, or the sharp nasal twang of the "American," as we call our neighbors of the United States. And

while a beautifully kept lawn of mossy greenness and velvet smoothness environed one home, the next was in a setting of Canada thistles or burdocks—or mayhap a "pratie patch," if the owner was an Irishman.

Tall sugar-maples stood here and there on either side of the street, and during the short fervid Canadian summer threw their grateful shade alike over velvet lawn and "pratie patch," donning in autumn a dress of russet, crimson and gold of that indescribable splendor which makes our maples the wonder and admiration of the world. A canal ran through the heart of the village connecting two of the great lakes, and across one corner meandered the river, called by the less ambitious—much to the disgust of the rising generation—the "creek."

I returned summer after summer to find little change—the village life was not subject to many variations. Sometimes a familiar face was gone, and a new stone was in the cemetery on the hill, and sometimes out of some proud mother's arms a little rosebud face looked up at me which was not there when I left the fall before; and sometimes a "rolling stone" would lodge a while among the maples.

But here was surely a new character—a Glad

Soul—I write it in capitals now, for in my heart I had given the old lady that name—it was not my privilege to meet before in the village.

After a while there were seats put across the church which the Glad Soul and I attended, in front of the pews; these, the sexton informed me, were for the old people who were "hard o' hearin'," and one morning I went to find the Glad Soul occupying one of them.

I could see her now without looking for her, and I learned after some weeks of observation that she was always on time, always in the same seat, and came with marked punctuality, rain or shine, carrying in her right hand by its black ribbon strings a pasteboard box neatly covered over with black, the cover tied down with black ribbons. This box I discovered contained her Bible and hymn-book, having just room for them and no more.

On dark rainy days, when the other churchgoers came in with a shiver or a shrug, and an expression of countenance which said more plainly than words, "Aren't we martyrs to a good cause to be out such weather as this?" the Glad Soul was more radiant than usual. Or did she only seem so in comparison with the tired, discouraged faces of the other women?

And once when Miss Grimshaw, who belonged to the choir, and felt she must be there, addressing her as she happened to walk down the aisle beside her, said complainingly, "Isn't it horrid weather?" with great emphasis on the "horrid," the Glad Soul beamed around on her, and whispered, "It's God's weather." Miss Grimshaw glanced surprisedly down at the plain black bonnet and glowing face, and giggled a little, but did not attempt any rejoinder.

The young man who was supplying the pulpit during the pastor's vacation, happened to be within hearing. He was a student and an ardent admirer of Browning, and catching the Glad Soul's gentle response, he murmured:

> "God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world."

On the way home from church the student preacher walked with me, and talking about the Glad Soul, who was also a stranger to him, he said with much emphasis:

"One can readily see that that old woman has had an easier time in life than most people; the pressing cares which have taken the joy out of other faces have somehow passed by her. You sometimes see it so," he added; "an inscrutable Providence."

"She looked out into the white misty storm, as if she saw some glorious vision."—*Page 13.*

While the worshipers were in church one Sunday morning later in the autumn, a squall blew up, with a flurry of fine snow and sleet.

The congregation, at least the womankind, crowded into the vestibule frowning, gathering up Sunday frocks and wrapping themselves in waterproofs, many of them to step into conveyances to be carried home. The Glad Soul, where was she? I looked about to see her coming down the aisle about the last—she had stayed to tie up her Bible and hymn-book—she was minus rubbers and waterproof, but the same light irradiated her countenance as did when the sky was blue and the sun shone clear.

"Why is that old woman not fretting about how she'll get home?" I said to one at my side clothed in waterproof and frowns. "She has a mile to walk and nothing to protect her."

I kept my eyes upon her until she came down to the door, where she stood and looked out into the white misty storm, as if away, through, beyond, and above it she saw some glorious vision, and understood the reason of it all.

"I'll reward her faith," I said, speaking again to my disconsolate friend. "My pony and covered carriage are here, I'll take the

Glad Soul home." Adding silently to myself:

"And I'll make her confess to me that care and sorrow have never shadowed her life."

So, after we were well settled in the carriage, I led her on by carefully considered questions to tell me something of her life history. It proved simple enough, after all, and quite upset my forecast. She had been the mother of twelve children, of whom one-half had been claimed by the harsh hand of death, and since the loss of her husband, some years previously, she had not had a home of her own, but lived for a time with each child in turn.

By the time she had concluded her simple story, we had reached the farmhouse where she was staying. The door opened and a stalwart young man sprang out to help his grandmother from the carriage.

While he was doing so a brief glimpse was given me of——

> "A quaint old room with rafters bare,
> A low white bed, a rocking-chair,
> A book, a stalk where a flower had been,
> An open door, and all within
> Peace and content."

As I drove home facing the storm, the fury of which had increased, my pony's feet—

usually given over to frivolities—as they struck against the hard frozen ground, seemed to keep reiterating, all the mile and a quarter I had to drive:

> "It is the soul's prerogative, its fate,
> To shape the outward to its own estate.
> If right itself, then all around is well;
> If wrong, it makes of all without a hell."

I told the theological student my experience the next time we met, but all he said was:

"You ought to teach your pony's feet to quote Browning."

THE VILLAGE HELPER.

HE was called the "village scold" by some of our people—by the blear-eyed men who loafed about the bar-rooms while their poor wives drudged to earn the family bread; by the wasteful women who threw out with the spoon what their husbands brought in with the shovel; by the unruly boys who robbed bird's nests, and tied tin cans to dogs' tails, and by the girls who left their mothers to wash the dishes while they gadded about the street.

To all such she was wont to speak her mind with fine frankness, and they feared and disliked her accordingly.

But by a far larger and worthier constituancy she was called the Village Helper, for

in all times of emergency, of sudden illness, or smiting sorrow, she was ever ready with common-sense competent help.

She was equally willing to serve in the home of the richest man in the village and in the poorest hovel.

When the little golden-headed cherub of Squire Murray, his eldest and most cherished child, lay down to die in her canopied bed under silken coverlets, it was the Village Helper who closed the big blue eyes, smoothed down the tossed curls, and helped to prepare the little body for the white velvet coffin and the quiet resting-place under the weeping willow in the cemetery.

It was she who called around to send the minister to comfort the heartbroken mother, and dropped in at a late hour the same night of her own accord to tell the leader of the choir to sing "We'll Never Say Good-by in Heaven," at the funeral.

In like manner when poor Patsy Flinn was fatally kicked by a vicious horse, and was carried groaning into his two-roomed shanty, it was she who helped to put on the burial robe in which to meet the grim messenger and then, at the earnest entreaty of his two shivering weeping motherless daughters, ran for the

priest to grant absolution to the departing soul.

She seemed to feel the responsibility of the whole village on her shoulders, and summer or winter, hot or cold, would walk to the extreme outskirts of it to inquire for the sick, or, in her own words, "to lend a hand."

It must have been for the pure love of it, for she usually received no more substantial reward for her ministration than the gratitude of those she served. I can see her now as I saw her the summer day she was going to the young theological student. He had come home from college all worn out, and much in need of good rest, but in order to provide for his next college year he supplied for the old minister while he was off on his holidays, and in a few weeks was down with a fever. He had been delirous for a week, raving alternately about sermons and Browning. Now he was convalescent, and, all "unbenownst to him," she was carrying him a beautiful speckled trout for his dinner. Her tall gaunt form looked taller than ever against the clear blue sky. Her lilac calico gown—she always wore the same color in calico—being straight and plain, added to her apparent height. A wide black hat shaded her immo-

bile face, the broad black ribbons floating out behind as she strode past with lengthy steps swinging the fish in her right hand by its tail. "Roll it up? Of course not. Why should she roll it up? Of whom was she afraid? What did she care for the opinion of over-nice people?" The over-nice people were only to be found among our visitors, for not one of the villagers would have changed her a mite if he could.

Yet it was the accepted opinion among them that she had no heart. For although she had "laid out" many a lovely child, whose death left an irreparable blank, and had again and again been present when the heartbroken sons and daughters paid the last tribute of love to mother or father, she had never been known to shed a tear. There were those who said she had shed so many in her young days, that in some mysterious manner, which only those who have reached the height can understand, she had gotten away above tears and vain regrets, while others, preferring a more prosaic explanation, would have it that she had simply been hardened by her long experience. But these were mere conjectures; no one in the village knew anything about her youth; and what she did really feel and think remained a

secret locked in her own heart, whence no solicitous friend nor inquisitive neighbor could draw it forth.

I have been told that once she surprised some of the villagers who thought they knew all about her, and I might be safe in saying that she provoked them, for although a quiet, not over-inquisitive people generally, they did not like being confronted by something novel and by them inexplicable.

It was when little Jimmy McShane broke his leg by falling out of a cherry-tree. The break was a bad one and the Village Helper and the doctor got to the scene of the accident at the same time. As it happened with all her experience she had never before seen a limb set, and she sat intently watching the doctor while with greatest care he set the limb and placed the splints about it, with a strange light in her eyes which had never been seen there before. When the doctor got through she heaved a long breath—she seemed not to breathe at all while he was at work—and said abruptly :

"Law! Now, if my folks had gi'n me a chance to learn how to do that I might ha' been some use."

The kind doctor detected the tone of regret in the voice, and said comfortingly :

"We have christened you the Village Helper."

"But if I had only learned how to straighten folks up, and mend 'em like you. An' there ain't nothin' I'd like to do better than mendin' folks up."

Then to cover what came nearer to being a display of emotion than she had ever shown before she stooped down and with great celerity began to pick scraps of lint and bandages off the floor.

I heard the women who were present talk about it many a time, but they could not agree. Although they had known her for years it was the first time they had seen her act in such a way.

Some said they really believed her "feelin's were teched," but others asserted she was out of temper with the doctor for "bein' so untidy with his splints and bandages."

Through some unrecognized affinity the Village Helper was drawn towards the Glad Soul. She never attended church herself, and yet if she chanced to meet the other on her way home from service the grim hard lines of her features would strangely soften, and she would check her strenuous gait for a moment to inquire in no mere perfunctory manner:

"An' how may ye be feelin' this morning?"

It was on a soft, hazy day in early September that I heard a rap on my sitting-room door leading into the street. There is always character in a rap, and with the rapidity with which thought can work, before I had time to give the invitation to enter, I had decided that some gentle spirit was seeking admittance. The gentleness, I reasoned, which must be in that citadel of the being, the heart, had crept down the arm into the fingers, and told its story in that rap on my door. Judge of my surprise, therefore, when, in response to my invitation, the opening door revealed the tall, severe, angular form of the Village Helper!

I glanced up from my sewing at her entrance, then looked again more sharply—it was the Village Helper, indeed, but the Village Helper transfigured!

I said nothing, I was so afraid to break the spell, but waited for her to speak.

She dropped into a chair, and said, in an awed whisper, "She's dyin'."

"The Glad Soul," I returned, for I had heard she was ill, and I knew the death of no one else would so move the Village Helper.

We gazed into each other's eyes for a space,

and said nothing ; mine were misty, but in hers was a clear, far-away look.

She broke the silence, continuing in the same awed whisper, as if talking more to herself than to me :

"She do say there be One in the room with her all the time, that she be never lonesome layin' there all the day an' night. It be a pretty sight to see her layin' there lookin' so sweet, so happy, so handsome."

Then glancing suddenly round at me as if she had just remembered my presence, she said, with some of the old brusqueness in her voice :

"It is worth yer while to go all the way out there jest to have a look at her."

She sat silent for a minute after this, and presently the hard face began to relax, the stern mouth drooped at the corners, the eyelids quivered, the whole frame trembled, and the next moment the Village Helper had buried her face in her hands, and was weeping violently.

"It's all right for her," she sobbed—"she be ready for a better country, an' is too good for this one, but what are *we* going to do without her? We never had her likes in the village before, an' never will again."

In a few moments she raised her head, and said shortly:

"Well, I oughter be ashamed o' myself," and, striding past me out to the kitchen sink, she washed her face and wiped it on the roller towel behind the kitchen door.

When she returned to the room the familiar brusqueness had come back into her voice, and as she was passing out the door I could see that the lines of her countenance were re-settling into their wonted grimness.

Two days later, as I was standing at my door, I saw her hurrying down the street with her usual swinging stride. When she came opposite me, without slackening her rapid pace for a moment, she called out:

"She'll git round agin."

There was no need of explanation as to the identity of "she." I knew that the Glad Soul had returned from the portals of the Hereafter to illustrate for a little longer the Kingdom of Heaven in our village of Mapleton.

During my long acquaintance with the Village Helper, the foregoing was the only occasion on which I ever saw her shed a tear, or betray any sign of emotion, but thenceforward I stood ever ready to stoutly challenge the assertion that she had no heart.

THE "DEESPENSATION."

HE was white-faced and spare, her eyes were downcast most of the time, and she talked in a low, monotonous voice sometimes falling almost to a whisper, so that you might have thought, if you did not know her, that she was of the meek and lowly kind, but you would have been sadly astray.

Although they would not admit it, all the men of the village were afraid of her, and some of the women.

Even a child is known by his doings, and it was told that the first year she was in school a pupil went crying home every day because of something Cordelia Nixon had said or done to hurt its feelings.

When Cordelia reached young womanhood

she had a voice and an ear, although there was more than one opinion concerning them. She joined the church choir, and then the troubles of that organization began.

She would sing when it suited her—like a lark—but when it did not suit her she would not open her mouth—no, not if the church itself should fall. And more than once, when most of the other members were absent, and the few present could scarcely carry the tune, she stood up facing the congregation with her lips tightly shut. Then the choir whispered to each other, and the people said to themselves, "Cordelia Nixon is mad about something."

She criticised the first bass by quiet side-remarks until he sent in his resignation, and the tenor, who was of another temper, only stood his ground to spite her, while she sent the leading "treble" home from many a choir practice to tears and a sleepless night.

She knew what every woman in the church had on, and detected at once any little economy, such as turning, dyeing, or patching, that had been practised in the presumably new outfit which appeared in the congregation.

She could tell the price of each visible article from the shoes up, and seemed to have an occult sense by which she knew when one of

the women got a bargain in her silk dress, or took advantage of a cheap sale to procure her winter mantle.

She married the meekest man in the village, and settled down to spend the remainder of her life where she was born.

She was a speckless housekeeper, and from the time of her marriage the one care and interest of her life which overtopped all other cares and interests, was criticising the housekeeping of her neighbors—their extravagance, their want of neatness, etc., etc.

"Puir thing!" sighed Granny Nielson, the oldest saint in the village. "She's so busy wi' the muck-rake she's no time to lift her een to God's sunshine."

"Dear me! I can't afford new wool carpets for my house," said Cordelia on the occasion of a young housekeeper near her indulging herself in a new sitting-room carpet—for which she had saved and scrimped during three long years—but then I try to keep mine clean." And her voice died away in an inaudible sigh. . . . "The last time I was in her house I sat across the room and saw dust back under the sideboard." And she sighed aloud this time to think such a state of things possible in the nineteenth century.

If a passing cloud obscured the matrimonial sky in any of the village houses—a husband or wife in a moment of haste or worry coming to words, perhaps for the first since their marriage—she always seemed to get wind of it—in fact seemed to have the faculty of passing the house just when the loud angry words were being spoken, and an ill wind carried them out the open door or window. Soon she was whispering it around the village accompanied by many sighs, that So-and-So and his wife had fallen out, warning each person not to mention it, and conveying to each person the idea that she was the only one to whom the awful secret was confided, thus keeping the scandal alive maybe long after the repentant couple had made up.

When Mrs. O'Grady's husband got the job of section-boss on the canal, and the family moved from a neighboring village to ours, and the good wife while tacking down her carpet was playing with her ten months' old baby boy seated on the floor some yards away, calling him a "rogue," and a "villain," and a "cheat," and all other similar pet names to which her warm Irish heart could give expression, talking loudly to drown the tack-hammer, by chance Cordelia passed, and lo! it went the rounds of

the village that poor Michael O'Grady was terribly "brow-beat" and abused by his wife.

So although he tipped the scales at two hundred pounds, some of the women saw the "crushed look in his eyes." And it took Mrs. O'Grady fully a year among us to live it down.

She joined the "Ladies' Aid" as other matrons did, attended regularly, and was against every measure that the other women agreed upon. At their annual tea-meeting she would do very little for fear she would work more than a certain rich woman in the congregation whom Cordelia insisted on considering proud.

The women of the church had a secret understanding between them, expressed at odd times by significant half-smiles, winks or nudges, but never in more audible form, that her tea-meeting cake must be put in a place of due prominence on the table.

If the said cake was eaten she would remark in an aside, "They'll eat my cake and carry their own home again." If it were not eaten she would carry it home, saying in a meek tone, "I suppose they thought it wasn't fit to eat." The next year she would not bake for the tea-meeting at all—and she was the best baker in the village.

If some of our women got anything new, or

accomplished something beyond the ordinary, Cordelia always called to see them. But while she admired what they had gotten or done, nevertheless she was morally sure to have heard, or seen, or read of something better of its kind.

She went to church regularly, once a day at least, but the sermon never seemed to suit her. With martyr-like air and downcast lids, she would sigh, and whisper into some ear as she was leaving the sanctuary: "Some people earn their money easy." Or, "It may suit some people, but that sermon was too heavy for me. There's no sense in a man soaring over the heads of his congregation, trying to show how much he knows." Or, wasn't that a childish affair this morning? I am sure such sermons are no help to me."

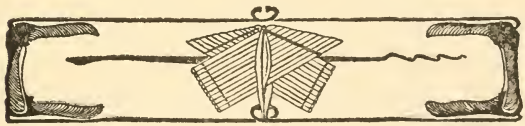
When the sermon was above the average, and really nothing could be said, she varied her remarks—

"Didn't the minister's children act in a scandalous manner this morning? Why is it that ministers' children are always so much worse than other people's?"—She had none of her own.—"There must be a screw loose somewhere."

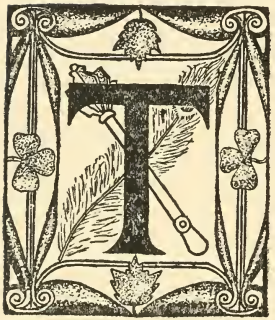
When the minister's wife appeared in some

new article of wearing apparel made according to the prevailing style, Cordelia remarked in an undertone to the other women that she did not think it looked well to see a minister's wife the leader of fashion. And when the dear woman decided to economize, and do with her old bonnet and cloak for another year, Cordelia said she was ashamed of her, she looked so shabby, she was doing it to get sympathy, and she—Cordelia—was sure people of the other churches would never dream they gave her husband the salary they did.

The minister grew gray—so it was rumored—wondering what would be done with her, and why he did not reach or touch her by some of his appeals. But the village generally settled down to regard her as a "deespensation," Granny Nielson in all goodness furnishing the word—a form of provocation ordained by Providence for the development of the graces of Christian charity and patience.



THE MEERACLE O' GRACE.



HE "Deespensation" had no patience with ailing women. She never was ill a day nor an hour in her life, and she frequently hinted that the delicate health of other women was assumed because they thought it was not genteel to be strong. Many a time did she go out of her way to give a cruel thrust at some suffering sister.

"When my time comes to die, I'll take to my bed, never before," she was in the habit of saying.

She neither gave nor sought sympathy, and only one who did not know her would have ventured to offer it.

"No one will ever come coddlin' 'round me with soups an' gruels," was another *sotto voce* remark of hers, intended specially for the ears

of the Village Helper, and failing her, to find a lodgment with some of her patients. Her air of incredulity, when one of the women, craving sympathy, so far forgot herself as to pour into her ear her tale of physical woe, was a study worthy the pencil of a Cruikshank.

Judge, then, the surprise, not to say consternation, in the village when one bright summer afternoon it went the rounds that the "Deespensation" was sick in bed, with the Village Helper waiting upon her!

Many women declared flatly that they would not believe it until they saw it with their own eyes.

It was Mrs. McTavish who found out all about how it occurred and told the other women. I may have missed some of the finer details of the story, but the following is in substance what reached me.

The husband of the "Deespensation" coming home on the day in question for his dinner, found the kitchen stove unlighted, no sign of dinner, and his wife sitting bolt upright in a rush-bottomed chair in the middle of the room.

"Cordelia!" he exclaimed in affrighted voice, "what be the matter with ye?"

Cordelia vouchsafed no reply.

"Air ye sick?" he demanded, for his fright

made him brave. The last three words seemed to arouse her from her strange rigidity, and she demanded in an icy tone:

"Did you ever see me sick, Wesley?"

"Ye air sick?" persisted Wesley, "yer es white as a ghost. Go an' lay on the bed, an' I'll run for the doctor."

Cordelia's response to this was a contemptuous sniff.

The anxious husband entreated, but in vain; Cordelia insisted in her cool, stubborn way that she was not sick, and would not "lay down." And to change the subject, she admonished him to get himself something to eat and to return to his shop as soon as possible, and leave her to peace and quietness; she was tired and wanted to rest a spell.

At their wedding ceremony it was Cordelia who had promised to obey, but subsequently their positions seemed to have become reversed, and Wesley had been an obedient husband for years. In this instance, however, he thought insubordination a duty. He knew something ought to be done, but did not know what, and murmuring an excuse about cutting kindling wood to start the fire, he went out doors,—he could think better in the fresh air.

Seeing a neighbor passing, he beckoned to

The Village Helper.—*Page 35.*

her, and creeping down to the front fence on tip-toe, told her about Cordelia's condition. Nothing could be accomplished by it, he knew, but it was a relief to tell some one.

She offered to go in, but Wesley begged her not to do so, as Cordelia would certainly be very angry with him for starting the report that she was sick.

The neighbor passed on, calling back when she had gone a few yards, "Give her a cup o' tea; there's a great deal o' virtue in tea"; and Wesley started splitting the kindling-wood, for he knew Cordelia, ill as she was, would be sharp to detect any double-dealing.

"Ill make her the cup o' tea," he said, as he split the pine, "an' then maybe she'll be more biddable."

The woman to whom he communicated his difficulty went on up the street, and accidentally meeting the Village Helper, she told her what she had heard from Cordelia's distracted husband.

"But there's no use'n yer goin' there," she added as the Village Helper at once made a move in that direction. "She won't own she's sick, an' she won't let no one 'tend her nor doctor her."

The Village Helper made no reply, but shut

her lips firmly together, tied her sun-bonnet strings into a second bow, and started on a brisk walk to Cordelia's home.

Wesley was gathering up the kindling-wood when she arrived.

"I hear tell ye've sick folks here," she said, addressing him without ceremony.

Wesley raised his hand warningly.

"Hish!" he said in a sharp whisper, "don't let her hear you, for the land's sake."

The Village Helper tossed her head as if that would be of small consequence, and started toward the door of the cottage.

"There's no use'n ye tryin' that," objected Wesley almost tearfully, stepping quickly before her, "she won't let ye tech her."

"Just leave that to me," responded the Village Helper, switching briskly around him and walking up to the door.

Without ceremony she turned the knob and walked in, while Wesley in fear and trembling waited without.

"It's a fine day," she remarked to Cordelia, untying her bonnet.

Cordelia made no reply, and looked all the hostility and disdain her unstrung physical condition could muster.

But the Village Helper took no heed of this.

Walking across the kitchen, she hung her sunbonnet on a hook behind the pantry door. She meant to stay awhile, and wanted to put it where it would not be in the way nor get crushed.

She saw at a glance that Cordelia looked a very sick woman, and having disposed of her bonnet, she proceeded deliberately into Cordelia's bedroom, which opened off the kitchen, and turning back the sheets on the bed, began to shake and pound the pillows with expert vigor. Having arranged the bed to her satisfaction, she unbuttoned her gown at the throat and wrists to give free play to her muscles, and then returning to the kitchen, she gathered Cordelia, who was not a large woman, up in her arms, carried her in, and laid her on the bed.

Between illness and rage Cordelia was by this time too near complete collapse to resist, and closing her eyes, she sank with a helpless sigh among the soft feathers.

Then the Village Helper began with professional ease to unloose her patient's garments and take off her shoes. Finding the poor woman's feet icy cold, she hurried up Wesley with the fire, and as soon as water was heated placed bottles filled with it and wrapped

in flannel at the foot of the bed, the "Deespensation" all the time glaring the protest she had not the voice to utter while submitting to the ministrations she had not strength to resist.

This was the beginning of a long and serious illness for Cordelia. In her delirious moments she kept persistently repeating "I am not sick," and "I won't have any one coddlin' round me with soups and gruels"; so it was thought better to shut out others who offered their services, and the Village Helper undertook the whole task of nursing her, being relieved only when she was obliged to sleep by the self-effacing Wesley.

Even the doctor thought it wise to direct the treatment and give his prescriptions through the medium of the nurse, oftentimes coming and going without exchanging a word with his patient.

With her face grimly set, as though battling against some unseen foe, the Village Helper hovered over Cordelia's bed, lifting her like a babe, shaking her pillows, turning her from side to side to rest the poor tired body, fanning her when feverish and placing hot-water bottles around her when the chills seized her.

At first it went the round of the village that she was going to die, and the people

looked at one another with awe-stricken faces, saying little but wondering in their hearts what the Almighty meant some lives for, and why he sometimes snuffed them out before they had illuminated this dark world in the least degree.

One day the Village Helper went out and found Wesley in the woodshed—it was a holiday and his small grocery was shut—sitting on a block of wood, with great tears raining down his cheeks. The report which was abroad in the village had reached him, and he was sure now that Cordelia was going to die.

Such is the strange nature of love, as with the ivy on the stone wall; the hardness and coldness of the object to which it has fastened its tendrils does not affect the clinging strength of its hold.

"Come," said the Village Helper, ignoring the tears, "split a bit of light wood. I want some water het to wash up the kitchen woodwork before Cordelia gits out there again; an' there's no knowin' how soon she'll be out now. An' a pretty talk she'll make ef she finds the kitchen in the dirt."

The grief-stricken man straightened himself and peered eagerly into her impassive countenance through red-rimmed eyes.

"Ain't she goin' to die, then?" he asked in a shaken voice that held nevertheless a hint of hope. "They're all sayin' down street that that she can't get better."

"Fudge and fiddlesticks" snorted the Village Helper contemptuously. "What do *they* know about it? Jest you split up that wood, and don't mind 'em."

Poor Wesley would have liked to ask some more questions, but he did not dare to, for this masterful angel of mercy had inspired him with a degree of awe only slighter than that which he held towards his better-half.

So he dutifully reached for the ax, and set to work on the wood-pile, finding some relief for his pent-up feelings in the energy of his occupation.

All through Cordelia's illness the Glad Soul had kept her room supplied with old-fashioned flowers delicately fragrant. One day it would be Sweet Alyssum and Garden Pinks, and another day Johnny-Jump-Ups and Mignonette. Then there were Bachelor's Buttons, Lady's Fancies, pale yellow Snap Dragons, with some sweet old Thyme for green, and occasionally a royal red rose.

Others of the women would have liked to do something but they had not the courage.

After three weeks of illness Cordelia ceased to resist, and lay white and silent accepting meekly the attentions of doctor and nurses. At first the doctor thought these were alarming symptoms, and was afraid the spirit was leaving the frail body, but as he continued his visits he was glad to note signs of slow improvement.

With gaining strength Cordelia's new gentleness became more marked, and when she spoke a few words to those waiting upon her it was in a meek almost plaintive tone, strangely different from her old sharp hard note.

The Village Helper said nothing but thought much, while in Wesley's fond heart there sprung up the hope of happier days to come than had ever blessed him before.

It was an eventful day when the Village Helper propped her up for the first time in the bed, with many pillows for her support. Wesley got a pink zephyr shawl he had given her years before, out of the cedar chest, and wrapped it around her shoulders. This he did very awkwardly for fear he might seem to her to be taking too much liberty, but when Cordelia smiled he was encouraged to put one of the Glad Soul's pinks of the same shade as the shawl in her hair. When she asked for a

mirror to look at herself Wesley was as happy as a big school-boy. Never before had he been allowed such privileges, and if it had not been for the evidence of his own eyes that she was daily growing stronger, he would have been filled with foreboding of her approaching death.

The first day she was thought strong enough to see visitors the Glad Soul called. Her face beamed from the recesses of her black bonnet and she carried in one hand a great pink rose, and in the other a mug of crab-apple jelly. Setting the jelly on the table, she went forward with extended hand to Cordelia's bedside.

"So ye've come back to us, dearie," she said with genuine feeling in her tone. "I'm awful pleased to extend the right hand o' fellowship to you once more on the shores o' time. The Lord hes some work for ye amongst us. I am sure we're all glad He didn't take ye to higher work yet a while. My, how lonesome yer place looks in the church; my old eyes is hungering to see ye sittin' there again."

The pale lips, which always before seemed inflexible, quivered under the kind words, but before she could frame any response the Glad Soul added:

"Here's a rose for ye, honey," presenting

the flower, "people es knows the flower language says it means love. I must be goin' now. We can't get more'n a peek at ye for awhile till ye're hardy." And she put out her hand for a farewell clasp.

Cordelia could never become a demonstrative woman, but while the Glad Soul was stooping over her bed, holding her right hand, she raised her thin left arm, and, placing it around the older woman's neck, drew her face down to her own and imprinted a kiss on the sweet old lips. So great was Wesley's amazement at this unprecedented display of feeling that he was fain to leave the room lest he should betray himself.

"Bring her out to church as soon as she is able to come, Wesley, an' let us all get a sight o' her," said the Glad Soul as he escorted her to the gate.

A fortnight later Wesley brought his wife to church, although he had to borrow a horse and carriage to get her there. She sat in her old place and every neck was craned to look at her.

There was such a wistful expression in her pale thin face that all the women, yea, and some of the men too, wanted to stop after service and shake hands with her.

"What mysteries we mortals be," said the minister's wife to her husband on the road home from church; "the divine germ can lie in the core of a heart; closely enfolded from all expanding influences, until sorrow, or pain, or love tears off the wrappings."

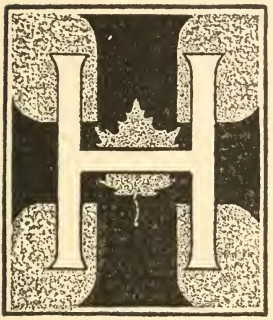
Evidently their thoughts had been running in the same channel, for he replied:

"That woman's face impelled me to direct all my message to her this morning. Strange how one face in an audience can draw on a speaker."

It was the following week that Granny Nielson called to see Cordelia. She chatted with her half an hour, and as she came away she murmured to herself in an awed undertone, "A meeracle o' grace."

THE OUT-OF-DATE MINISTER.

THE OUT-OF-DATE MINISTER.



E was a spectacle to be seen," said the smart young people of his congregation, and perhaps we would all be inclined to concur in this opinion if we could see him passing down the street, tall, awkward, loose-jointed, carrying two carpet-bags, one containing his pulpit wardrobe, and the other his sketching material, for this was one of his few recreations.

His body seemed to be an incumbrance which the soul was obliged to carry, as a penalty for remaining in the material world. His hair grew shaggy and unkempt, suggesting that he had himself cut tufts from it here and there simply to get them out of his way, and only to those who remembered that a hoary head is a crown of glory, when found in the

way of righteousness, notwithstanding defective barbering, was it beautiful to look upon. His whole wardrobe, from the weather-beaten hat to the dust-colored boots, showed a fine indifference to appearance.

It was the expression of his eyes which won a second glance from the less superficial observer, for it seemed as if, unconscious of his present surroundings, he looked into a far country. Although there was no hint of unhappiness or discontent an indescribable hunger showed in their blue depths, so plainly discernible that even Granny Neilson, with her dim spectacled vision, saw it, and I heard her say once :

> " He'll ne'er be foo' content
> Until his een do see
> The gowden gates of heaven
> And his ain countree."

He came to the village a youth from college, and stayed with this first flock until he had grown gray in their service, or rather in the service of their children, for all of his first congregation, with but few exceptions, had gone over to the great silent majority, and their seats and offices in the church were being filled by a second generation.

Of course these young people knew very little about how he looked when he first came to the village, but Granny Neilson delighted to enlarge on what a tall bonnie lad he was, with his light curly hair and his bright blue eyes. The congregation, this second generation, often talked him over at tea-parties, and Ladies' Aids, and wondered why he never married. He was too young when he came there, Granny Neilson said, to have had any previous attachment, and she always added:

"There were plenty o' promisin' girls in the village when he came, and surely no girl would want a bonnier man, nor better."

For example: Mary Fleming, who played the organ for the little church, which was considered a marvelous accomplishment by the entire village, even though it was but a small reed organ. Of course some of the jealous mothers who yearned to see their Jane, or Eliza, or Jemima, filling the honorable position had not always complimentary things to say about Mary. But the latter was a graceful, capricious, dark-eyed maiden; so lovable, as Mrs. Brady, who lived next door to her, said, that "no one could hold a gredge agin her long."

Then again Susan Colville, who taught the

infant class, a better girl could hardly be found; or Hetty Anderson, who led the "treble" in the choir; or Agnes Turner, who conducted the village school, and others still, any one of whom, to quote Granny Neilson again, "would ha' made a gude wife for ony man, no' exceptin' the young minister himsel'."

Yet although nothing would have pleased his first congregation better, the young minister did not apparently incline to aught of these fair maidens, but in a great brotherly fashion seemed to take them all into his heart. On warm summer evenings he would occasionally happen into "choir practice," and at such times he would walk home with sweet Mary Fleming. But just as some busy housekeeper was hurrying up the morning's work to have a little friendly gossip about it with her neighbor who was hanging out her washing in the next backyard, she would see him passing with Agnes Turner on her way to school, whereby she was completely "upsot," and could not understand what it all meant.

Again, while on one Sunday his attention would seem to be particularly taken up with Susan Colville and the infant class, the next week he would be telling members of the congregation on their way home from prayer-

meeting how much they owed to Hetty Anderson for her faithful service in the choir.

Some of the people did not like it, the "complainin' bodies," a few of whom are found in the best congregations. They said they "did not believe in his runnin' about so." Why could he not settle on one girl and "keep company" with her? Others said he was just actin' as a Christian minister should, that they believed "he never thought of marryin', his mind was so sot on heavenly things."

During the many years of his village pastorate, his life was seemingly uneventful to the verge of monotony. There were only two serious breaks in its steadfast routine of duty, the first occurring when Mary Fleming was married. It could be remembered well, for of course Mary had hoped to have him perform the ceremony, but this hope was not realized, and Mary shed tears in secret over her disappointment.

Her marriage came as a great surprise to every one. A strange young man, a dashing sort of chap, made his appearance in the village. He had a good voice, and was invited to join the choir, and presently, before folk had "suspicioned" anything, it was announced that he and Mary were engaged.

"She's doin' well," was the almost unanimous verdict of the village, for the young man had brought with him sufficient capital to start in business for himself, and bid fair to prosper.

To be sure, there were a few who shook their heads sagely, and said Mary "tuk up with him too sudden," while some motherly hearts felt great solicitude for the orphan girl who had grown up among them, and endeared herself to them, and wished they knew more about the young man who had thus appropriated her.

Shortly after the news of the engagement came out, the young minister took ill, and on the day of the wedding he was in a raging fever, so that another minister had to act in his place.

His illness proved very serious, and his mother, accompanied by a nurse, came to care for him. There were days when the angel of death hovered very near, and business was almost suspended in the village, while his congregation went about their necessary duties with bated breath during the day, and met in the little church in the evening to pray.

On Mary Fleming's wedding-day he became wildly delirious, and the whole village was

plunged in gloom, so that it appeared more like a day of mourning than a day of rejoicing, and the superstitious ones said it was an ill omen.

Some said the fever was brought on by the "deep speeritual sermons" he had been preparing. But it was noticed by these same people that his sermons were more deeply spiritual than ever after he recovered, and was able once more to occupy his pulpit.

When he got about again, his mother, a gentle, silent woman, decided to remain with him, and take charge of the manse. She was a widow, and she disposed of her own homestead in order to devote herself to her son. The reasons for her action were much discussed by the congregation, and some were of opinion that this looked as though she did not expect him ever to marry. Indeed, it was whispered around among a few,—the hint came from the nurse,—that something he said in his delirium led her to what she had done.

There was a change in the minister when he came out of his sick-room, which every one felt; he was more gentle and silent, like his mother; he did less visiting, and liked to be more alone. He preached such sermons as made more than one aged listener say they believed that, like St

Paul, he had got a glimpse into the third heaven, and he visited the sick faithfully, but he walked no more with Agnes Turner, nor Hetty Anderson, nor Susan Colville, and he was never known to go to choir practice again.

Indeed, some people, "the complainin' ones," found fault with him for not visiting more. There was Mary Fleming, for instance, who was well started in housekeeping before he left his room, and he did not call on the new-married couple for full three months. It is doubtful if he would have done it then, he seemed so absent-minded and "queer-like," had not one of the older women of the congregation reminded him of his duty. Again, he seemed more taken up with his sketching than ever before since his coming to the village.

As was feared by some, Mary Fleming's husband did not turn out well. A few months after his marriage he began to show his real character, and in the years that followed, sorrows came thick and fast to poor Mary. Three sweet children she laid to rest in the village cemetery with scarcely a tear, for how could she wish to keep them here with such a home and such a father?

The minister visited her, and sought to comfort her through all her trouble. But it became

evident that every day she was growing more frail, until one winter morning her spirit silently slipped away from its earthly tenement.

Strange to say, on the very same day the minister again fell ill, and another minister had to be obtained for Mary's funeral service. The illness was not nearly so severe this time. There was no fever nor delirium, but the minister simply lay with that far-away expression in his eyes, white and silent, looking, as the women who came in to offer their services said, ' more like a speerit than a human bein'.' "

The day of the funeral was cold and bleak, but there was a large turnout of Mary's old friends, women and men alike following the body to the cemetery. And one remarked that if the minister's nerves were weak she was glad he was not there to hear the thud of the frozen clods as they fell on poor Mary's coffin, it sounded so " lonesome-like."

The day after the funeral he got up, and began to go about his duties again. He preached, visited his sick people, and sketched, these occupations making up the sum of his existence, as far as one could judge, for many years.

One of his Sunday-school boys had become a

well-known artist in the city, and the old minister made periodical trips to see him, carrying his two carpet-bags, the one containing his broadcloth coat in case he should go to visit a brother minister, or be called on to occupy a pulpit, and the other his sketches. The artist took great interest in his old friend's work, for he showed unmistakable talent, considering he had enjoyed no instruction.

After his mother's death, when he was left to the tender mercies of a housekeeper, he became completely absorbed in his work, his preaching and his sketching, and almost utterly oblivious of everything else.

Presently the younger people of the congregation began to find fault with him—his personal appearance, his antiquated ways, his solemn sermons, and wanted some one more modern and youthful for their spiritual guide.

They were spared the pain and trouble of telling the old man this, for one morning in the glory of apple-blossom time his housekeeper, putting her head inside his study door, found him sitting still and silent in his chair, and she saw at a glance that there had come to him a call, which would not be gainsaid, to a higher field of labor.

Gently closing the door she ran across for

the "Village Helper" and the two women entered the study together.

The old minister was leaning back in his arm-chair, his eyes quietly closed, while on his knees lay his large-print Bible wide open, the index finger of his right hand pointing to a particular passage; the other hand tightly clasped a small portfolio.

The two women tip-toed forward, and bent down to read the verses, which were heavily underscored with blue ink. This was what they read:

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"I am sure," said the housekeeper, almost indignantly, "I do not see why he sot so much store by that passage, he never was hungry nor thirsty to my certain knowledge. I have been seein' to that myself these good many years, an' I never recollect him sheddin' a tear in his life."

The "Village Helper" made no reply, but began to loosen the portfolio from the clasped fingers of the other hand. No sooner had she

done so than there fell from between its covers a dozen small sheets of paper. The women hastened to pick them up, and behold! they were all sketches of Mary Fleming, most of them drawn when she was the fair young organist, but others belonging to the time when she was a sorrowing careworn woman.

The old minister's secret was out at last, his heart-hunger and unshed tears could now be understood.

The women looked at each other in silence. Neither of them was given to sentiment, but for fully ten minutes they spoke not a word.

The "Village Helper" laid the sketches carefully back in the portfolio and tied a piece of white ribbon about the cover to prevent prying eyes from seeing the contents. And when the old minister, looking noble and majestic, lay in his coffin, she very gently—for she could be gentle as a dove, as well as fierce as a hawk—placed the portfolio under his left arm, beside his pulseless heart.

If you ever visit the village cemetery you cannot fail to see his grave. It is the tallest white shaft there, and above the usual inscription, high up on the shaft, are the words—

"They shall hunger no more."

A COMMON MAN AND HIS WIFE.

"That there thing ain't good fer nothin'."—*Page 61.*

A COMMON MAN AND HIS WIFE.

THE RAM LAMB.

HAT there thing ain't good f e r n o t h i n',"
growled Jake Bender, giving a prod with his heavy boot at the apparently lifeless body of a lamb stretched on the half-frozen ground. Then picking up a clod, he threw it at the mother sheep hovering concernedly near her helpless offspring.

The remark was addressed to his wife Jane, who was standing near with a shawl over her head and around her shoulders, she was out milking. She made no response, but as her husband disappeared into the barn "shooing" the reluctant old sheep ahead of him, she caught up the forlorn little body in her strong arms, wrapped her shabby shawl tenderly about it and set off for the farmhouse.

Her appearance as she strode across the corner of the stubble-field taking the shortest cut home, could hardly have been more commonplace. She bent forward as she walked; her skirt was short, to "git quit o' the mud;" her cow-hide boots, their leather laces tied in a clumsy bow-knot at the top of each, showed plainly beneath the short skirt, and her faded shawl, whose ends enfolded the shivering lamb, was drawn tightly around a thin, weather-beaten face, and yet, at the moment, she was performing the work of an angel—if angels are ministering spirits.

Her husband, on coming out of the barn and seeing that the lamb had disappeared, cast an angry look after her, muttering:

"There she be agin, wastin' her time over that there half-dead lamb, which ain't no good fer nothin'. *I* oughter know! She be always a-coddlin' over some lame hen or sick chicken, or—or somethin'!"

While she, as she looked down at the lamb in her arms with a great tenderness in her eyes, murmured:

"He be gettin' harder an' harder every day. . . . If I had only tuk Silas Marner. *He'd* a had a kind heart," and a sigh for the lover she had rejected years before, when she gave the

preference to Jake Bender, broke from her thin lips.

Jake Bender had a mighty good opinion of himself. He thought he was always right, and had asserted this infallibility for so long that he had almost brought his meek, self-effaced wife to think so too. But on this occasion she had allowed her heart to get the better of her head.

She kept on with the lamb to the house, and there laid it gently upon a piece of old carpet placed behind the big wood-stove where the heat would fall generously upon its numbed body. Then warming some of the milk which had just been brought in from the barn, she managed to coax a few spoonfuls of it down the creature's throat.

When Jake, who had been out to the "sugar-bush" visiting the sap-troughs, came in he cast a contemptuous look at the lamb behind the stove, saying,

"That there thing ain't good fer nothin'; *I* oughter know."

And he would have given it another cruel prod with the toe of his big boot if Jane had not anticipated him and protected it with her hand.

After a few hours of warmth and judiciously-

administered nourishment the lamb was persuaded to open its eyes on the world again. By noon it could raise its head, and when night came it could actually stand on its feet. Two or three days later Jane considered it well enough to be returned to the old sheep.

But, strange to relate, the maternal instincts of the latter seemed to have taken flight, and she refused to own her offspring. So the lamb was thrown back upon the tender mercies of its benefactor.

Jane, nothing loth, brought it to the house, and despite the constant protest and scorn of Jake, continued her daily ministration to its wants.

It grew in vigor and beauty daily, and when it was two months old Jane christened it "Dandy."

Jake, not having succeeded in stopping his wife in her work of mercy and love, and hating to be thwarted, then threatened to kill Dandy, as good spring lamb was bringing a high price in the market.

Jane, aghast at the proposition, for the lamb had now become a real pet, and fearing lest her husband would carry his threat into execution some morning before she was up, hunted out an old padlock, fastened with it the door

of the small pen in which Dandy was kept, and carried the key on a piece of twine suspended around her neck.

That summer, by happy chance, the prize list of Canada's great industrial fair fell into Jane's hands, and she was aimlessly looking through it when her eyes alighted on the following entry: "Best Ram Lamb, fifteen dollars."

At once she conceived the idea of taking Dandy to the fair. There surely could not be a finer lamb than he, why, therefore, should he not win the fifteen dollars? She would tell Jake nothing about it, but would forthwith begin to save up money from the sale of her butter and eggs to pay the necessary expenses. She afterwards confided to a neighbor that she made cider apple-sauce, and "made it extry good a-purpose," and Jake and the hired man ate it with relish in lieu of the butter, suspecting nothing of her plans, but thereby leaving her more of her excellent butter to sell.

As the day of the fair drew near Jake, one evening when he was at a neighbor's house, heard a whisper of what his wife intended doing, although Jane had breathed it to nobody save one woman "in a secret." He cogitated about it as he walked home along the quiet country road.

"She won't do it when the time comes," he said positively, after a prolonged meditation, addressing the "snake fence" which divided his fields from the highway. "She's too skeery. She never went anywhere by herself in her life, let alone a great tearin' city like Toronto, an' I won't go with her. I'll be slivered if I will!"

And a noise issued from his mouth which was intended for a laugh of triumph, but suggested the "crackling of thorns under a pot" more than anything else.

"She ain't a-goin' to come it over me that that there lamb is good fer ennythin'. I said onct for all *that there lamb ain't good for nothin'*, an' I oughter know."

But he waited in vain for his wife to ask him to go.

It was with no slight quaking of heart that Jane Bender began to make preparations to take the lamb to the Fair herself, yet she was buoyed up all the time by the determination to let Jake see that Dandy was good for something.

Dandy was occasionally a little obstreperous, as all pet animals of the male sex are apt to be, and although a kind neighbor offered to take him along with his sheep, Jane was obliged to

go herself, and lead him by a cord, for not a step would he budge for any one else, and so it came about that on the afternoon of the last day of entry she had the high satisfaction of seeing him, proud and haughty, standing within one of the pens on the fair ground.

He was certainly a beauty, and she did not see how the judges could fail to realize it. She had washed him to almost spotless whiteness, and tied a blue ribbon around his neck.

He was a saucy, petted fellow, and had a trick of holding up his head, and looking fearlessly at the people, that gave him quite an air of superiority over the other sheep, which huddled close in groups, looking frightened and drooping.

The sheep had to be in on the third of September, but were not judged until the seventh.

Jane spent every intervening day on the fair-ground, most of the time looking after Dandy. Her nights she passed with "Almiry" Jones, a niece who lived in the city. She carried her lunch with her, and sat on some retired seat in the grounds timid and "scareful," and munched the bread-and-butter Almiry gave her, with some of her own homemade cheese. And while she was eating, the

kind neighbor, when attending to his own sheep, gave a bite and sup to Dandy.

On the fateful seventh Jane kept close beside Dandy's pen until the Judges, bedecked with badges, fussy and important, made their appearance, and then she shrank away to a secluded corner to await their verdict in a tremble of anxiety and hope.

Once and again she nervously peeped around the corner to see if the men whose judgment meant so much to her had gone, but they were still before the sheep pens talking busily.

"If they don't give Dandy the prize I'll not take him back to the farm," she whispered to herself. "Jake will have him killed for sure, and he'll never let me hear the last of it neither."

After what seemed to her an unconscionable delay, but was in reality only a few minutes, the Judges passed on, and the moment they had disappeared, Jane, with white set face, quivering lips and beating heart, darted out of her concealment.

Oh! the ineffable joy of it! What mattered all her silent, patient endurance of Jake's rude ridicule, her harrowing dread that he would put into execution his threat of converting the beloved Dandy into meat for the

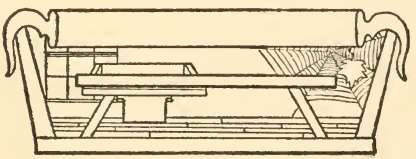
market? For there, pendant to the blue ribbon, and showing bravely against the snowy fleece, swung the big red ticket which signified First Prize.

Jane Bender was not a woman of the school who take pride in a cynical suppression of emotion. She did not care a jot who might see her and be moved to laughter, as with amazing agility for her years she clambered into the pen, and, dropping on her knees, hugged Dandy to her heart, her thin gray locks loosened by the sudden exertion, falling over his shapely head as she murmured proudly:

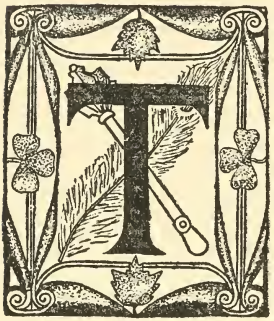
"I allus knowed it, Dandy."

The following day there arrived at the Mapleton post-office a post card the writing upon which plainly indicated a pathetic unfamiliarity with the use of the pen. This was the message it bore:

Mister Jacob Bender,
"Dandy's tuk the First Prize.
"Jane Bender."



HOW JANE SPENT THE PRIZE MONEY.



HE week following the Fair when Jane Bender, upon whom I depended for my household supplies of butter, eggs, vegetables and other produce of the farm and market garden, made her appearance, there was something in her look and manner that seemed quite new to me—a kind of exaltation of the whole woman, unmistakable and yet hardly describable.

She came to my back door, and as she picked the articles one by one from her basket—a pair of plump white chickens, some "garden sass," a dozen new-laid eggs, and a jar of golden butter fresh and cool which she had suspended in the well the night before—I closely studied her face. What was passing in that inner realm we call the spiritual which had

filled the woman with such exultant energy? What unwonted emotion had conjured up such a change in the stereotyped patient face, whose straight lineaments had seemed lost in the many haggard lines drawn upon it.

Was she so proud of the tempting appearance of her well-dressed chickens and new-laid eggs, or the perfection of her golden butter? Surely not, for these qualities had been just as marked on previous occasions. I waited for her to speak, but she said very little, and that little was merely regarding the weather, and the state of the country roads.

She replaced in her basket the linen towels in which the chicken and butter had been wrapped, and was taking it on her arm to go away, when I remarked—in order to draw her out—I had known her for a long time and could not let her go away without having some fellowship with that glorified spirit.

"What about your fifteen dollars, Mrs. Bender, are you going to spend it to-day?"

She turned as she was going down the steps of my back veranda and with a smile that transfigured her face said:

"It's spent a'ready."

"You have got yourself a black silk, or a set of dishes, or a carpet!" I returned quickly,

knowing the usual self-indulgences of our women.

"No," she replied, "I sent it all to Ingy."

"To India!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she responded, looking off into a frost-tinted maple tree at the farther end of the yard, for October had dressed the landscape in that golden garb so dear to the artist, with here and there a bright touch—a crimsoning maple, a brilliant low red sumac, or a yellowing vine.

Art had done very little for Mapleton. We had no triumphs of architecture, nor monuments of mechanical skill, but nature, especially in the autumn months, seemed bent on gracious compensation. I knew, however, by the expression in Jane's face that her gaze went far beyond my maple tree.

"Why did you do that?" I asked, with a touch of disappointment in my voice.

"Ye see it wus this way," she answered placing her foot on the upper step, and resting her basket on her knee. "I hev alwus thought a lot about heathen women in furrin' parts ever since a girl I uster go to school with went es a missionary. I have read about 'em since that, es she sent me a paper onct in awhile, an' readin' about 'em made me feel sorry fur

them heathen women—a sight more'n for the heathen men. Sakes alive! women hev it hard enough enywhere, an' what must it be where they hain't got quarter the comforts we got—fur this world or the next? I alwus, ever since Laviny Miller went to Ingy, wisht I could send some money to help 'em a bit out there. O' course Laviny got more learnin' than me," she continued musingly, looking off again into the maple tree. "Her an' me went to the same country school, an' we sot together, an' traded dinners many a time, she havin' stewed huckleberries on her bread, es her folks lived beside the huckleberry mash, an' me havin' honey on mine, es my folks kep' bees,—an' both our folkses was savin' the butter to sell—an' we bit turn about offen the same apple; Red Astrachans, I mind, we both liked. After she left that school she went off a-studyin' in other schools, an' got a great edication they say. But, someway, she never forgot me—she was a nice girl, Laviny was; an', es I said, onct in awhile, a mission'ry paper came through the mail to me from her, with her name, Laviny, in the old way wrote on it. Jake, he uster to bring it home in his overcoat pocket from the office—in winter when I didn't come to the village, havin' no butter an' eggs to sell—an'

forgit to give it to me, an' I would find it, mebbe a month after, when I went a searching.—Jake never tuk no interest in missions. Well, es I said, frum the time Laviny went, especially when I knowed with all her book-learnin' an' all she hed to tend to, she hedn't forgot me, her old schoolmate, an' when I read in them papers she sent about the awful hard times women hed out there I wisht I could send 'em somethin'. I never hed no money I could call my own, an' Jake would give me none o' hisn. I tuk Dandy to the Fair by colorin' my old bottle-green alpacy dress with copperas—it wus faded bad—an' usin' the money I had been savin' fur three years from my butter an' eggs to buy a new one, to help pay our fare an' keep—mine and his'n. The first money I could really call my own was Dandy's prize money, an' right at onct it came to my mind to send the prize money to Ingy to Laviny.

"Almiry Jones, my niece in Toronto, who saw me git the money, wus dead sot agin it. 'Git a black silk fur yerself, Aunty,' says she; 'you hain't got none, an' it is what every woman should hev—to wear to weddin's an' funerals, an' sech,' says she. An' I ain't denyin' hevin' a hankerin' after a black silk myself—every time I see the other women lookin' so respect-

able in their'n," she added with a little apologetic abashed smile. "Almiry was so sot on my gittin' the black silk," she went on relapsing into her narrative tone, "I didn't like to disappoint her at onct, so I said, 'I'll think about, it Almiry,' and I came away home.

"Well, es soon as I got home one neighbor advised me to get a set o' chiny dishes, an' another a pair o' lace curtains, or some mats fur the settin'-room floor, fur they all heard o' me comin' in fur some money, es it hed come out in the papers about Dandy's takin' the first prize. An' then Jake, he come, an' proposed I give the money to him to buy a heifer at a auction sale which is comin' off soon. But thinkin' it over when they were all gone, an' I was washin' my dishes alone, I said to myself, 'Jane Bender, how kin you be indulgin' yourself with a silk dress, an' chiny dishes, an' lace curtains, an' floor mats, an' them poor creatures in Ingy sufferin', an' you never done nothin' fur' em?' An' es fur givin' the money to Jake to buy the heifer at the sale," she added, looking down at the floor, and lowering her voice as if thinking aloud rather than speaking to another, "the money wus mine—he alwus did es he pleased with his'n. Pears like the money came to me a-purpose," she continued after a moment,

picking nervously at a splinter in the arm of the veranda chair which I had prevailed on her to accept a few minutes before, "because I wisht so hard fur some to send. I never before hed any really my own to give,—not even the widow's mite—married women don't seem to hev no mite—an' that prize money came, an' I made up my mind to send it straight to Laviny, without givin' it to eny missionary society. Not that I hev anythin' agin missionary societies, but I did not want any third party handlin' it an' takin' a hunk off it to pay hisself fur doin' so. So the schoolmaster as boards with us sent it this very day to Laviny."

I was just about to raise my voice in protest against this sacrifice of Jane's; she never had had a silk dress, nor china dishes like the other women, and there were no lace curtains in her house, but as I lifted my head to speak there was a look in her face that made me pause. Jane was no longer on my little back stoop, sitting in my rush-bottomed rocking-chair, but away off in burning India with her fifteen dollars in her hand, rescuing and helping some poor suffering sister. Her eyes were brimming with unshed tears, and an ineffable exultant joy beamed on her face.

When she came back to me she said, as she

rose with an awkward jerk from her seat, and adjusted the basket on her arm :

"A black silk would wear out, an' chiny dishes would git broke, but I'll hev that fifteen dollars in Ingy goin' on doin' good to think uv all my life."

As she walked away I stood in my doorway following her with my eyes. I ought to have been satisfied. Jane was certainly more than satisfied, yet I did want to see her the owner of a black silk dress, and so just before she passed through the gate I called after her:

"Dandy is still your own, Mrs. Bender?"

She paused to answer in a tone of proud satisfaction :

"He is that, ma'am."

"And he'll be a shearling next year, and you may win another prize with him?" I went on.

A broad smile of approval was accorded my suggestion.

"And if you do," I persisted, "you'll get yourself the black silk? Now, promise me."

Jane straightened herself up, gave a solemn nod of assent, and then, turning her back, went striding down the village street.

THE EFFECT UPON JAKE.

OME hours before Jane Bender had made known to me the manner in which she had disposed of her lamb's prize money she was busy in the spring-house putting up her butter and eggs, while the schoolmaster, seated at the kitchen-table with pen and ink and a litter of the missionary papers before him, was engrossed in addressing, in the most ornate style at his command, an envelope to "Laviny" in far-off India, when Jake entered the room.

The schoolmaster had just finished the "L" with a long flourish. He was elated over being Jane's confidant in regard to the forwarding of her money, and so absorbed in his work that he did not notice Jake's entrance.

Having completed the address he held it at

arm's length, and scrutinized it critically, then half closed his eyes, as an artist does when he studies his model to distinguish light and shade, and looked at it again.

"Wall," said Jake after watching him awhile, "that seems to be mighty interestin'."

"Yes," said the schoolmaster absently, without taking his eyes from his work, "it's a pretty important thing to send money off as far as India."

"Ingy!" exclaimed Jake, all his surprise echoing in his voice. "Who's sendin' money to Ingy?"

"Mrs. Bender is sending the sum of fifteen dollars for missionary purposes," returned the young man importantly, examining the address again, one eye being shut this time.

"Her prize money!" exclaimed Jake. "If that don't beat cucumbers!" Then he dropped into a chair and an expression of complete mystification possessed his countenance as he sat gazing apparently at a small hole in the plastered wall.

In a short time Jane entered with that undefinable something in face and bearing which I observed a little later when she came to my house, and her husband watched her curiously as she moved about the kitchen putting the

finishing touches to her basket. Then a strange abashed look crept into his face; he ceased following her with his eyes and only glanced at her furtively from time to time.

"Wall," he said aloud to the four white-washed walls of the kitchen after she and the schoolmaster had started off to drive to the village, "women be queer creatures," and after a lengthy pause, "they be.

"I did think she'd buy some folderol fur herself—a black silk she uster talk about considerable. I heerd her onct in her sleep. . . . She ain't hed many folderols in her life—since she was married leastways. . . . She uster like 'em well too. I wonder if she's stopped carin' fur 'em. . . . What was there about Ingy made her look so this mornin'—like a gal thinkin' o' her beau—kinder smilin' an' dreamy? . . . Put me in mind o' what she was like afore we was spliced." And Jake paused in his work—he was mending a halter—and gazed harder at the hole in the plaster, while his mind traveled back over the years which had elapsed since his courting days when love's young dream made all the world a paradise. "She was a purty fine lookin' gal then," he added, proudly straightening up his bent shoulders. "Man, but didn't Si Marner try

hard fur her, an' me a-laying awake nights plannin' how to git the inside track on him. An' I got there. An' Si owned his own team and fifty acres clear, an' mine hed a lien onto 'em."

Jake seemed to be seeing through the hole in the plaster now, clear into space at the other side of the wall. A softened look stole over his rugged countenance, and he smiled broadly a couple of times.

Then he grew sober again, his eyes contracted to their wonted size and he continued. "I wonder if she's ever sorry she give Si the bounce an' tuk me? . . . Si's done well—drives a fine team an' democrat. . . . The wife he married some three years after wasn't nowhere beside Jane fur good looks. . . . She's changed wonderful, Jane hes. Since the two young uns was put in the graveyard she hain't been the same woman. . . . They'd 'a' been a good-sized boy an' gal now ef they'd 'a' lived. The gal they say favored me, but the boy was the picture o' her. It cut her up terrible partin' with 'em."

And Jake drew a short fluttering breath which was remarkably like a sigh ere he proceeded:

"I wonder if she's sorry fur not takin' Si?

Money'd be plentier with her ef she hed—Si's done well. . . . What got into her this mornin' anyway?"

Then having finished the halter Jake leaned far out of his seat, reached his long sinewy arm toward the missionary papers on the table, and picking one up gingerly with his thumb and forefinger, began to read it, as if he would find in it some explanation of Jane's incomprehensible behavior.

He read, and as he read his face grew increasingly serious, while such exclamations as "I'll be slivered ef I ever heerd anythin' to match that," or "Why in thunder don't somebody stop em?" broke from him at intervals.

He was not profane in the ordinary sense of the term, but he had a set of quaint expletives, some of them quite original, which he used when he considered the occasion demanded.

On this occasion he was reading about the cruel treatment of child-wives or widows in India, and, in spite of his rough exterior, he had in his heart a very tender spot for children.

He sat there and read on, in one paper after another, until he heard the sound of wheels and saw Jane and the schoolmaster driving into the yard.

Then he threw the papers back on the table,

hustled out by the back door and began to make a mash for a sick cow, as he had no wish that Jane should know how the time of her absence had been occupied.

During the weeks and months which elapsed before Jane heard of the reception of her gift in India, she went about milking and churning, baking and stewing, and doing the endless work of a farmer's wife with the elevated spirit and enriched life which doubtless came to the woman of old when she had given her two mites.

The cold weather had set in, and Jake also was busy housing and feeding the stock; but he studied his wife as he would study some curiosity, yet with the abashed look which seemed to have become stamped on his face, as if he felt himself to be in some superior presence.

One morning he was threshing in the barn, and between the strokes of the flail he heard the strains of a song. Was it Jane? "She uster sing when she was a gal." These were only thoughts, but Jake left his work and made himself some excuse for going over near the milk-house, whence the sound issued—he had lost a whetstone in the grass around there a couple of years before—and he heard his

wife with many hemi, semi, demi quavers singing—

"Must I be car-ri-ed to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas!"

Jake was strangely moved. Was it Jane's voice plaintive in song? or was it the words of Isaac Watts' old hymn that so stirred his dormant emotions?

"On flowery beds of ease," he repeated as he went back to his flail. "What does she mean?"

He thought about it helplessly all through the forenoon.

That afternoon he was left alone, the schoolmaster having gone off with his gun—it being Saturday—"to hunt patridges," and Jane was helping at a quilting, so having plenty of time for thought and retrospection, as he sat in the kitchen chopping mangel-wurzels to fodder the cattle, he kept repeating "Flowery beds of ease. What did she mean? . . . I needn't 'a' been quite so clost with her. . . . Si'd 'a' given her more. . . . Si wus alwus more offhand ner me. . . . Couldn't blame her if she wur sorry fur not takin' Si. . . She never said so, but I couldn't 'a' blamed her ef she hed."

It so fell out that one day as he went to the

village alone, and called at the post-office for his weekly *Tribune*, the post-master put into his hand, along with the newspaper, a letter. It was addressed to his wife, and on inspecting the envelope back and front, and examining the stamp Jake discovered that it was from India. He was hardly less anxious than Jane to hear from "Laviny," and accordingly hurried through his business, not stopping for a word of politics, and drove home at as fast a pace as the old sorrel could show. A couple of times he took both reins in one hand, and drawing the letter out of the depths of his pocket, examined all the post marks again, and read the address—"Mrs. Jacob Bender." Somehow it made him feel lifted to see his name, "Jacob," written in that beautiful distinct hand.

"I'll go bail 'Laviny' herself wrote that," he said aloud, and startled at the unusual tone, the old sorrel halted to look around at him. He even held the letter up between his eyes and the setting sun to see if he could decipher any of the words within.

"I kin hardly wait till I git home," he soliloquized, as if apologizing to himself for the action, "to find out what 'Laviny' thought o' the fifteen, an' ef she saved any o'

them children from bein' treated bad out there with it."

His face was quite flushed when he entered the kitchen and handed Jane the letter, saying jocosely (he had joked more of late than he had done for years past) :

" Open it up quick, old gal, and tell a feller the news."

Looking timidly at him—she had not been able to understand her Jake lately, and sometimes seriously wondered if he were going to die soon—she began shyly to tear off the end of the envelope. When she had accomplished this, she drew out the enclosure and began to read it whisperingly to herself, tracing the lines along with the front finger of the right hand.

" Oh, old woman, let's have it; where's the use o' secrets?" cried Jake.

Jane looked up in surprise, keeping the place with her finger, and stared at Jake for a couple of seconds, then in a high-pitched, district-school sing-song tone, still tracing each word with her finger, and making short pauses every few words, followed by sudden rushes forward, she read the letter aloud :

" My Dear Jane : Your letter and contents came to hand this morning, and I hasten to

tell you of the hearts you have gladdened by your timely gift. My own heart was made inexpressibly happy, as I was just about to have to turn from my door for want of means a most needy case, when in the very nick of time your money came. I look on it as a wonderful providence. Surely some good angel put it into your head and heart, dear old friend, to do that generous deed just when you did. The case was that of a little girl of remarkable intelligence, a child-widow of nine years, frail and beautiful, starved and ill-used, because a man of high position, to whom she had been betrothed, died. All her own family had died, and the family of her betrothed husband were in charge of her. Her remarkable beauty had attracted attention, and they were about to sell her, when to save her from this fate an old nurse stole her away. To make a long story short, after being carried many miles, she was at last brought to my door. My house was already more than full and my purse stretched to its utmost, and although my heart was breaking, I was going to be obliged to send her off again when your letter was put into my hands.

"On the strength of your fifteen dollars, and with faith in God for more when it was gone,

I took her in and put her in my girls' school. That sum will support her for quite a while in India, and I am hoping that when it is exhausted Providence will send us a further supply, so that we can keep the sweet child until she is educated and christianized, able to take care of herself, and perhaps be of incalculable benefit to her suffering sisterhood in this benighted land. Eternity alone, Jane, can reveal the good that your fifteen dollars may do.

"Oh, if people only knew what a small sum per year would keep and educate a girl in India in one of our mission schools, surely more of them would make sacrifices to give it!

"Remember me to your dear husband, whom I have never had the pleasure of meeting, but knowing you so well I feel as if I knew him. Such a bright, tender-hearted little girl as used to bite off the same apple with me at school must surely have chosen a good man. Along with yourself I thank him for the precious gift, for I feel he must have been your sympathizer and helper in this matter."

Jake had been keeping a strong grip on himself as the reading of the letter proceeded, yet if Jane's attention were not so absorbed in her task she would surely have been filled with

concern at the strange contortions of his homely features; but the tactful eulogium, which he knew to be undeserved, proved too much for his self-control, and, bringing his big feet together with a thud that startled Jane so that she almost dropped the letter, he groaned rather than exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be slivered!"

Without remark Jane continued reading:

"Hoping that you will both remember your little girl in your prayers—for from the beginning I have called her yours and given her the English name of Jane Bender. She is such a winning little puss we have toned the woman's name down to the girl's, so you can think of me every day as calling her 'Janey.'

"I remain your loving friend,

"Lavina."

A moment of absolute silence followed the conclusion of the letter, and then Jake, rising awkwardly from his chair, said under his breath so that Jane barely caught the words:

"Our Janey'd be just about that age ef she'd lived," and stamped heavily out of the kitchen, while Jane, wiping away the tears from her eyes with the corner of her apron,

proceeded to set the sponge for the morrow's baking.

Half an hour later, when she was up to the elbows in flour, Jake called out from the sitting-room, to which he had retired to ponder things over as he oscillated in the rush-bottomed rocker:

"Don't ye think ye kin send enough every year to keep that little gal in Laviny's school, Jane? Ye oughter."

"I don't see how I kin," said Jane doubtfully.

"Would the profits o' six or seven sheep do it?" shouted Jake.

"It oughter go a good way," she returned.

"Wall, you write to Laviny at onct, an' find out what it will cost to keep her by the year; an' six more sheep are your'n, Jane, along with Dandy, which makes seven—seven's a lucky number they say—an' bime-by, ef ye hev luck, ye'll hev twict seven, an' that's the way money's made. Howsomever ef that won't do I kin make up the balance—mortgage or no mortgage. An' ye can git some folderol fer yourself, ye hain't hed none for some time—a black silk, or somethin'."

Something in Jane's throat prevented her making any reply.

Presently, after she had the bread set and

the kitchen tidied up, she went quietly into the sitting-room to find Jake with his head thrown back on the rocking-chair and to all appearances sound asleep.

She gazed at him for a moment in silence while there took place a strange stirring among the dry-bones of her heart. Then, yielding to an impulse such as had not moved her for many years past, she tiptoed over to her husband, bent down, and kissed him full upon the forehead.

Jake never stirred, so fast asleep he seemed, but the instant she left the room he lifted his head, put his fingers up to feel if the unwonted kiss had left any trace of itself, and then, muttering:

"I guess the sorrel better have some water," he went out into the kitchen, found a pail, pulled his hat down on his head and just as he was at the door called back to Jane, trying hard to make his voice sound careless and indifferent:

"Ain't ye sorry now ye didn't marry Silas in place o' me? He's a hundred acres more'n me, clear, and probably he'd 'a' gi'n ye more money all along."

"No, I ain't," responded Jane with prompt decision.

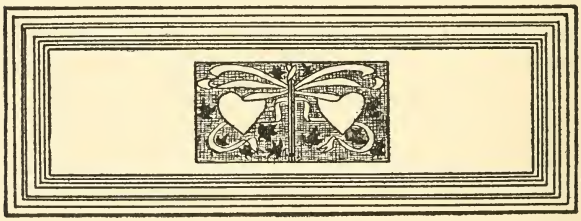
"Ef ye could git a chance o' both o' us agin, what would ye do? Come now."

"Do es I did before," retorted Jane emphatically.

Jake opened the kitchen door and stepped out into the yard, while Jane intuitively anticipating that the wonders of the day had not yet ceased, bent her head forward in an attitude of keen attention. Nor did her instinct play her false. Back from the darkness without came the notes of "Comin' Thro' the Rye" rudely and yet accurately whistled.

Jane flushed, as she murmured softly:

"The last time I heerd him whistlin' that wuz the year we wuz married."



FROM THE "OULD SOD."

JERRY McCLOSKY.

NE corner of our village was devoted to the Irish. Here the householders had each his own potato-patch, and his own pig, and felt well-nigh as contented and happy as if still on the emerald isle.

There was the "Widdy Brodie," and the "Widdy McShane," and there were the O'Reillys and the Sullivans, the O'Gradys and the Flinns.

"But the Irish blood in most of 'em, worse luck! is mixed with English, Scotch or German," said Jerry McClosky. "It's mesilf's the only thorrybred Irishman among 'em. Wasn't me father an' me mother Irish? an' didn't I come direct from the ould sod to yer village?"

He was large and loose-jointed, and you could have told he was an Irishman a quarter of a mile off by his all-over walk. A sight of

his broad, mirth-provoking face would cheer you up if in your deepest fit of the blues, and his bow and "good-mornin' to ye," with a winning cadence in the voice, would provoke a smile on the sourest visage.

He had a large round head with some curious protuberances, which some of the villagers said were indications of remarkable mental powers that, alas! had remained undeveloped. Others, however, asserted that they were caused by the many tumbles the owner got during his oft-repeated "sprees." Jerry himself explained the bumps by saying "there wus so much time shpent in the makin' av me heart, me head got the go-by."

He seemed to regard high and low with equal good-will, and doffed his many-dinted high-crowned hat with equal deference to the Village Helper in her "laylock" calico gown walking in the middle of the road—she scorned plank-walks in dry weather—and to Mrs. Squire Murray clothed in soft raiment, and riding in her covered phaeton.

He came to the village without introduction, bringing along with him his Irish wife, and their children—"The full av six," as he proudly announced every time any one was interested enough to inquire. He often told us that he

had been offered many inducements to settle in the United States, but he never wanted to get from under "Victoria, God bless her! and the ould flag." He settled down to do most anything that turned up, as he was a sort of Jack-of-all-trades. He did his work well too, for had he not learned to tinker, and thatch, and patch in Ireland? He could shingle a barn, make a chicken-coop; he could be mason, carpenter, plumber, glazier or tinker, as circumstances required. He could repair refractory clocks with almost professional ease. These accomplishments, in a village which had not all the trades represented, were vastly appreciated; and in a few years the village wondered how it ever got along without Jerry McClosky.

But, I regret to say, the oft-recurring "sprees" of this genial son of Erin caused him frequently to break his engagements, which was a very serious fault, and made his employers think many a time that they would wash their hands of him entirely.

He had, however, such an ingenious excuse on every occasion, that, along with his tone and manner, no one—at least no one in the village,—could resist him.

He promised in early summer to go over and make a coop for Mrs. Murray's choice thorough-

bred chickens, and that good lady had postponed a visit she intended making in order to be at home on the particular day to superintend its construction. The day dawned bright and auspicious, but Jerry failed to put in an appearance. This was not the first time he had failed her, and thinking of the postponed visit, she felt very much put out. All the next day passed and still no Jerry, and by the third morning, although a very gentle woman, she had prepared a severe lecture for him. She was going over the exact words in her mind to be sure to have them effective.

"Jeremiah—yes, I will call him Jeremiah," she thought, "it will sound more impressive—Jeremiah is a Bible name—Jeremiah, why did you not come the day you promised? Jeremiah, do you not know what a very wicked thing it is to——"

"Good-mornin' to yez, ma'am, an' a foine day it is," broke in a rich brogue, almost tender in its tone, at this point in her meditations, accompanied by such an indescribable bow that she had to bite her lips to repress a smile. And forgetting her prepared speech, she exclaimed, in a voice in which she miserably failed to put any indignation, and, in spite of herself expressed kindly interest: "Why, Jerry,

what happened to you the day before yesterday?"

"D'ye mind what a lovely day it wus, ma'am?" said Jerry, raising his eyes honestly and steadily to hers. "An', on me sowl, I wus walkin' straight here wid the intint av buildin' that chicken-coop in no time, an' as I kem along two av the b'ys stud forninst me, Mark McGiven, wid the casht in his left eye—God save the mark!—an' Timothy Doolin. 'Come on, Jerry,' says they. 'Where to?' says I. 'To fish,' says they. ''Tis a beauty av a day fur fishin',' says they. ''I'll go bail the fish will fight wid wan another to bite the hook,' says they. 'Or if it's a net you use,' says they, 'in the words av scripture, ye'll not be able to dhraw it fur the multitude av fishes,' says they.—I don't approve mesilf av wrestin' scripture, ma'am.—An if ye'll believe me, the first thing I knowed me legs wus runnin' off wid the rest av me to the lake."

Then, before Mrs. Murray could frame a reply, being a woman of slow speech, "Thank ye koindly, ma'am, fur yer gentleness, an' the swate forgivin' spirit ye are exercisin' toward the wakeness av wan who is far from deservin' av it. It's that same chicken-coop have come betwigst me an' me natural sleep these two

nights. 'Twas a beauty av a coop I wus makin' in my dreams, it wus."

To be sure, Jerry did spend that bright day at the lake, and brought home two small fish on a string. He also brought a befuddled brain—the lager-beer brewery was at the lake-side—which it took him another day to straighten up sufficiently to go to work on the chicken, coop.

Mrs. Murray knew by past experience what in all probability was the truth; but what else could she do save meekly follow Jerry, as with tools over his shoulder he swung himself toward the scene of his operations, as if building chicken-coops was the one thing in the world worth being interested in!

She said afterwards, in relating the whole thing to her husband, that there must be some magnetism about those Irish, for one could not be angry in Jerry's presence.

When any of the good people in the village attempted to remonstrate with him on his drinking habit, his ready wit always came to his aid, and while they knew they should frown, alas! they were obliged to smile.

One evening he called to get his pay for a small job he had done for the Methodist minister. He was not quite steady and the

minister saw it. He was a new minister, and really had hopes of reforming Jerry.

"My poor fellow," he began, "whisky is your worst enemy. Don't you think you can put your foot on it?"

"Ah," said Jerry in his unctuous voice, "isn't it yir riverence himself who taches us to love our enemies?"

"No, no, Jerry, not that enemy."

"Ah, but it's goodness itsilf ye are to bother yer head about a good-fur-nothin' spalpeen like Jerry McClosky," said Jerry, moving toward the door. "Indade, if ye have a failin' it's too good ye are, an' it's the loikes av ye makes this world so much loike hiven the rest av us are niver carin' whether we get to a better wan or not. By the same token, it's mesilf that believes ye'll put the very angels to the blush whin ye do git to hiven."

"Jerry," said the minister, with a deprecatory wave of his hand, "will you promise me that you——"

"I promise ye," said Jerry, solemnly interrupting, as he bowed himself out through the doorway, "that I'll take the first glass av whisky that's offered me." He closed the door on his last word.

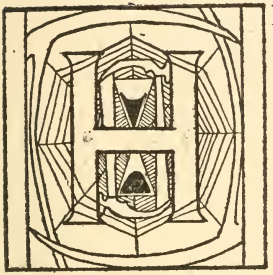
Now, Jerry would not be so audacious as

this if he had not already been under the influence of a glass, and he felt ashamed of himself when he sobered up. The next time he met the minister he bowed more obsequiously than usual, and came nearer blushing than ever before in his life.

The godly people of the village smiled and sighed every time they met Jerry. How could they help smiling at the sight of his face? and how could they help sighing when they remembered, as those Bible-bred people always did remember, that no drunkard would inherit the Kingdom?

They all agreed there might be hope for Jerry if he could live until prohibition had driven the intoxicating dram into the recesses of the apothecary's shop, from whence only the stiffest physician's certificate could extract it. For Mary McClosky, his wife, said more than once: "Jerry would let the whisky alone if a saloon wasn't standin' forninst him at every turn, wid the smell pourin' out av every door and windy."

A BROTH OF A BOY.



E was a stocky little chap with a wide mouth, turned-up nose, and blue Irish eyes which looked unflinchingly into your face. He walked with quick, important strides as if he knew he could bully every boy in the place, and swung his arms at his sides like pendulums of a clock.

He was blamed for all the mischief that happened in the village, and seemed to greatly enjoy this onerous reputation.

"Look at that now!" cried Mrs. Brady, in loud wailing tones, over two empty shells in her bantam chicken's first nest, which it had perversely chosen to make in the church horse-shed not twenty yards away. "That there McClosky's boy has been here an' sucked me two banty's eggs, an' I intendin' 'em to set fur

early chickens. There's nothin' too bad fur that boy to do!"

The said boy was at this moment just around the corner of the shed holding by the hind legs a weasel which he had killed in the very act of sucking the eggs. A white light gleamed in his blue-gray eyes, and a pleased look wreathed the broad mouth.

He was a curious combination of his good-natured father and his earnest, anxious mother, no doubt with several ancestors thrown in.

Watching Mrs. Brady through the chinks in the shed, and hearing all she said, he hurriedly dropped the dead weasel into an old dried-up well, for fear it might be found and credited with the egg-sucking, and started to walk leisurely away, being very careful to keep in full range of Mrs. Brady's indignant black eyes.

Before night everybody in the village knew McClosky's boy had sucked Mrs. Brady's eggs, and ere Sunday his Sunday-school teacher, who lived a mile out in the country, had heard all about it. Indeed by the time the story reached him the boy had been caught in the very act of sucking the eggs. So, much to the edification of McClosky's boy, expressed only by that curious white light in his eye and the pleased

look around the capacious mouth, the faithful teacher spent most of the half-hour intended for the exposition of the lesson, enlarging on the sin of stealing—"even such a small thing as an egg."

When Mrs. O'Reilly's lines, on which she was bleaching her linen, refused to bear the weight imposed upon them, and snapped in the middle of a rainy night, letting the linen into the mud, the owner was quite certain "McClosky's boy kem in the dark an' broke 'em."

Even good-natured Mrs. McShane, who confessed, in spite of all, to having a "lanin' to the b'y," when she went to make up her "crab-apple jell," and had hunted a full hour and a half for her jelly bag, forgetful of its having burst asunder the summer before and being made into dish-cloths, said, as she sank exhausted into the kitchen rocker, "I hope to die, I don't know how he kem by it, but McClosky's boy must ha' made off wid it somehow!"

McClosky's boy did not get this reputation for nothing, however. From the time he was able to toddle alone he went in quest of adventure. The small country village did not furnish much scope or variety, and to gratify his enterprising nature he was fain to seize on the

ordinary things of life and exercise his ingenuity to render them extraordinary.

"It's himself that had rather be after cuttin' up some tricks nobudy else would think av doin' than eatin' his vittles," sighed his bewildered mother.

"The de'il himself couldn't beat that boy of McClosky's for devices and schemes," said that sorely tried man, the village schoolmaster, who had been training the young idea of Mapleton for twenty-five years. Then in a quieter moment, with a far-away look in his eye, as if he would peer into the dim vista of the future, he added: "Nevertheless I would not be surprised if that boy should be heard from yet."

"Not even the church and the minister himself are safe from his capers," growled the indignant caretaker of the Presbyterian place of worship.

It was McClosky's boy who had put a board on top of the church chimney, when the aforesaid caretaker was working so hard, to heat up the church for the annual meeting, that although the thermometer was below zero, the perspiration rolled down his face. How he wondered in the depths of his vexed soul why that wood stove would not draw!

It was McClosky's boy who took out a plank and secreted a cat under the extemporized platform built for the Methodist church tea-meeting. And then just as one of the visiting ministers was warming up in his speech, and entering on his favorite matrimonial joke, which Mrs. Brady said had not been told more than seven times from that platform—she was born in the place and ought to know—did not Pussy begin to meow most dolefully to the instant distraction of speaker and hearers! She proved to be such a ventriloquist, moreover, that the brethren who went in search were some time in locating her, and the joke was spoiled both in the telling and the hearing. Mrs. Brady averred, however, that the cat was "a agreeable change."

It was McClosky's boy who dropped red pepper on the stove at singing-school, when the stove was red hot and the schoolhouse was full. It was McClosky's boy stuck the cushion of the teacher's seat full of pins, points up, and cut the legs off stools and placed them so that the unwary would confidently sit down. Then everybody knew it was McClosky's boy who, one Halloween night, took Johnny Lumsey's shoe-making sign and nailed it to the Widow Finch's front gate,

where neither Johnny nor the widow found it until noon the next day, by which time everybody else had seen it.

Johnny was a bachelor and had just begun to spend most of his evenings in the widow's cozy sitting-room; and could you blame the latter for being very angry at McClosky's boy? Indeed so many and varied were his exploits that no biographer would be equal to the task of enumerating them.

"He hav' no evil intint in it at all," pleaded his anxious mother, "an' is only afther wantin' a bit av divarsion."

Others, however, refused to be so lenient in judgment. But, in spite of all, it had to be acknowledged, even by those who held the worst opinion of him, that McClosky's boy had a tender heart for suffering and helpless things.

"Crazy Tim," the semi-idiot, found in him a constant protector, and woe to the urchin whom McClosky's boy caught hurting a dog or a cat, robbing a bird's nest, or tormenting a girl.

Strange to relate, this boy who was the plague of the older people and the terror of the other boys, was a favorite and hero with the girls. He was the boy who found the first pussy-willows in the spring, who knew where

the wild strawberries ripened earliest, and was posted in all the mysteries of birds and their nests.

When Prissy Johnson's kitten, pursued by two terriers, in sheer fright ran clear to the top of a telegraph pole, where it clung and mewed for a whole day, no one daring to climb for it, McClosky's boy, swinging around that way, with a far-away look in his eyes, as if his soul could travel to other climes if things became too tame and monotonous at home, and finding Prissy in tears at the foot of the pole, dived into that wonderful receptacle, his trousers pocket, drew out a pair of spurs, clapped them to his heels, climbed the telegraph pole, gently detached the kitten and brought it down to its sobbing mistress.

Prissy, beside herself with joy, would have given him a hug, but he dexterously darted out of sight among some elderberry bushes.

Again, when Rose Murray dropped her pretty French china doll into the darkest and deepest part of the sluggish river which divided the village, McClosky's boy immediately plunged after it, staying down so long that the group of admiring girls on the bank began to wring their hands and cry. And then, after prolonging their agony as long as pos-

sible, he came up covered with mud and glory, his hair and hands full of weeds, and the French doll in his mouth.

Then at home in the back yard he built a comfortable kennel for a lost dog he had found wandering about the street. There was also a sunny corner for a three-legged cat which had lost its fourth paw in a trap. A roomy old cage held a robin which had retired into a thicket to die with a broken leg. And there were various minor interests, such as a toad blind in one eye and a mud-turtle with a broken shell.

But there came a time when the village forgave all the mischievous doings of McClosky's boy.

It was on a fine evening in August when the canal bridge was being opened to allow a steamer to go through, and McClosky's boy was sitting on the extreme end of the span getting a free ride, as he had often done before. On the opposite bank of the canal little five-year-old Rose Murray, a dainty bit of gold and white, with her soft muslin pinafore and profusion of yellow curls, leaning too near the precipitous edge, fell into the deep waters, right in the way of the approaching steamer. McClosky's boy saw her fall, and,

while the men around stood motionless, without a moment's hesitation he sprang in after her. He rose quickly to the surface holding aloft in his right hand the dripping bundle of white muslin and tangled gold, and passed it up to eager outstretched hands. But just at that moment the vessel swept by, and McClosky's boy, caught in the swirl of waters, disappeared from sight.

They dragged the canal for his body until midnight, ceasing only when they became convinced that it had been carried out into the lake by the swell of the boat.

It was then that the village forgot all but the virtues of McClosky's boy. They saw him in their mind's eye lying on the bottom of the cold lake with the mysterious majesty of death upon him, and their hearts melted within them.

Mrs. Murray, as she pressed her rescued darling to her heart, felt a keen pang of remorse, remembering that she had always disliked to see her little girl so fascinated by the outlandish Irish boy, and she resolved to make all the amends she could by placing a tablet to his memory in the Sunday-school room.

"Ochone! Ochone!" wailed Mrs. McShane, covering her head with her apron when the intelligence reached her.

"It's a brow of fine proportions and great promise over which the cruel waves are washing to-night," said the schoolmaster, wiping the beads from his forehead.

"He helped me pile, in cord-lengths, the church wood when he saw me stiff with the rheumatics," said the caretaker, forgetting all about the board on the chimney.

"We'll hev no one to make fun fer us now," sighed Mrs. Johnny Lumsey—formerly the Widow Finch—with something bordering on a sob.

"His blue eyes alwus hed a merry twinkle in 'em for everybody, an' the very plant uv his fut an' swing uv his arm betokened he wus afeered uv no one," said Mrs. Brady, remembering how he looked when he walked away from her bantam chicken's nest, and wondering how she could have felt angry with him.

When they heard the lost dog howl in his kennel they wiped their eyes and spoke softly of his owner's tender heart. Crazy Tim, with his arm for a pillow, spent the night on the bank of the canal, getting up every little while between snatches of sleep to gaze wonderingly into the silent waters. And every little girl in Mapleton sobbed herself to sleep on her pillow.

While all this was taking place in the village

McClosky's boy lay snug and warm in the bunk of one of the sailors on the out-going vessel. He had been accustomed to the water almost from babyhood, and instead of being swept away by the swell, as the villagers thought, he dived down and grasped one of the fenders on the steamer. A sailor, soon seeing him, threw a rope and hauled him aboard on the side of the vessel which was away from the crowd standing on the bank.

A few days later the steamer stopped at a lake port, and McClosky's boy began to fear that his pets at home should be suffering for lack of attention. The cat with the three legs could not do much at mousing. His mother might forget to give the lame robin worms. The "kids" around might take advantage of his absence to abuse the lost dog. And "Crazy Tim"—who would look after him? And all the little girls of the village? "Some av 'em may be afther wantin' me fur somethin'," he meditated aloud—"to climb after her cat, or dive fur her doll, or—or somethin'. Another wan av 'em may be tumblin' in the canal." So he decided to return.

It was nearly dusk when he entered the village, with the white light in his eyes and the pleased look curving the wide mouth.

"Bad luck to ye fur a b'y" exclaimed Mrs. McShane, as soon as she had recovered from her start at seeing him—he had to pass her place on his way home and stopped in—"fur worritin' a poor woman so she could nather ate nor slape." Then she filled his pockets with "fried-cakes," and took him by the arm and led him to his mother.

The villagers rejoiced over him that night as over one returned from the dead, and said to each other, with many a wise nod and wink, "That McClosky's boy will be heard from sure."

THE MOTHER'S REWARD.

THE morning after his return home McCloskey's boy rose early and ate a hearty breakfast, his mother, who had provided for the occasion a new-laid egg, standing by while he was disposing of it, accompanied by slices of buttered toast, and declaring "the b'y ain't atin' enough to feed a chicken." The good woman had never dreamed she was the mother of such a wonderful boy until she heard it from the neighbors when they thought he was drowned, and now that he was restored to her she could not do enough for him.

The "b'y" enjoyed the experience of being coddled—as what boy wouldn't?—and did not hasten his repast. When it could be protracted no longer he wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, stretched himself, feeling in truth a

trifle overloaded, and crushing his almost brimless hat over his tangled hair, started off down street, his mother standing in the door, with her hand over her eyes, proudly watching him.

He had not passed out of her sight when little Rose Murray, who had completely recovered from her cold plunge and was swinging on the big gate opening into her father's beautiful grounds, attired as usual in dainty befrilled garments, espied him, and at once flew to meet him.

Sidling up to him she grasped his big thick brown hand with her soft white fingers, and much to his confusion insisted on accompanying him down street in this fashion, their clasped hands swinging to and fro as they walked.

The big boy gasped for breath when he felt the touch of the soft fingers, and glanced down sheepishly from his coarse blue-jeans to her dainty garments. He regretted now that he had not saved up the money he earned in the spring planting potatoes to buy a new pair of trousers, as his mother urged him to do instead of wasting it on torpedoes and firecrackers Dominion Day. His hands had never before appeared so rough and brown and

clumsy, and he wished he could get a chance back to the kitchen "hand-basin" to give them another wash, and he groaned in spirit at his boots, when he saw their dust color glaringly contrasted with his companion's dainty patent-leather shoes.

But Rose felt perfectly at ease, and was evidently proud of accompanying her hero down street. She walked along in silence for a while, gazing up into his face with a puzzled look lurking among her dimples, and then she burst out:

"When you was drownded my mama said you was a wonderful boy, she said. 'There will never be such another boy in the village,' she said. An' my papa, he said, when you was drownded, he wouldn't 'a' been s'prised to see you in Parli'ment—that Irishmen have gone from the cabin to the House afore this, an' you had just the stuff in you for that. An' the schoolmaster, when you was drownded, said there was a glint in your eye, which meant somethin', and the dust wouldn't stick to your heels at school when you liked. And the Sunday-school teacher, when you was drownded, said he couldn't keep from takin' more than a common interest in you, you was so bright. An' when you was drownded, Mrs. McShane

said she loved you like her own son. An' all the women said you was a favorite of theirs, when you was drownded. An' all the little girls cried when you was drownded. Isn't it nice to be drownded an' have people love you?"

"Yes," replied McClosky's boy dreamily, seeing Rose was looking up in his face waiting for an answer.

She chattered on in this fashion to her astonished hearer until they reached the heart of the village, when the sight of a doll in a window suddenly reminded her that she had forgotten to dress her youngest doll-baby for the day, and she incontinently left her dazed companion and trotted off home as fast as her little feet could carry her.

He followed her with his eyes until she turned a corner, and then after walking a few steps, meditatively gazing at the ground, he turned as suddenly as she had done, and in long slow strides struck out toward home.

When he came near the house he began to make a circuitous route, for he did not want his mother or any one to see him. He approached from a back street, and climbing on the roof of the "cook-house," as the small board lean-to in which the cook-stove was put in

summer was called, he reached his own bedroom window without being observed.

This window was minus several panes of glass, but what of that? On rainy days the apertures were filled by the crowns of old hats, and on sunshiny days the birds could come in and out without hindrance. There was a swallow's nest in the rafters at that moment in which several broods had been raised.

His first proceeding when within was to tiptoe over to the bed, and pulling the feather-tick which his mother had placed there the night before in honor of his return—her best goose-feather bed—out onto the floor, he flung himself into the middle of it. Then, as he began to look down on its immaculate cleanliness, he sat up and drew off his dusty boots and threw them into two opposite corners. His mother at her wash-tub below heard the dull thud, paused a moment to listen, and said to herself, "Thim rats is knockin' things 'round in the garret agin," while the real object of the disturbance, burying his elbows in the feathery billows and resting his chin in the palms of his hands, began to meditate, and his meditations expressed aloud ran something after this fashion:

"So they were afther thinkin' I wus good

fur somethin' whin they tho't I wus drownded. Mrs. McShane loved me like her own b'y she did. I'll shovel her snow fur her next winther, I will. An' the little girls all cried whin they tho't I was drownded. The nixt quarter dollar I git I'll buy 'em all some sweeties, I will. An' the schoolmaster tho't there wus a glint in my eye which mint somethin', an' the dust wouldn't shtick to my heels at school whin I loiked. An' the Sunday-school tacher couldn't help taken more thin a common interest in me, I wus so bright. Did yees ever hear the loikes?"

This question would seem to have been addressed to the feathers in the bed, for at the moment he was carefully extracting one from the tick, and having secured it he placed it on the nail of his right hand thumb, and with one mighty blast tried to blow it up to the bird's nest in the rafters. "An' the little one's ma tho't there'd niver be me loikes in the village agin, an' her pa tho't I might git to Parli'mint, no less." Here McClosky's boy turned a summerset in the middle of the feather-tick—"An' all the wimmen said I wus their fav'rite."

Then he stood on his head at each of the four corners.

"Well, it would be a cryin' shame to disappoint 'em all," he said, when he had recovered breath. "I'll hav' to see what I kin do."

A faint echo of all this reached the hard-working woman below, but she still attributed it to the pestilent rats, and cogitated, while she rubbed hard at the sleeve of the b'y's shirt, which he wore all the time he was away, whether poison or a trap would do more effective work during the coming night.

The next morning the mother of McClosky's boy was much astonished to see him, with boots all blacked off the under side of a stove-cover, ready for school, as it was wont to take several maternal admonitions to get him started after ever so short a stop.

The schoolmaster a little later was no less surprised, and said to himself: "I'll go bail, this spell won't last long—he's on his good behavior now."

All that day McClosky's boy had perfect lessons, and all the next, and for the week following, and the master and the whole school looked on and wondered. This perfection continued so long that after a while it ceased to cause surprise.

"I told you so," said the schoolmaster wagging his head, when it became an estab-

lished fact that McClosky's boy was "goin' ahead of 'em all" at the village school.

"Didn't I say the same?" exclaimed Mrs. McShane in high soprano—"he'll not shtop short av Parli'ment."

"No more than we expected," averred the united head of the Murray family.

"Ye needn't 'a' told us that," cried a chorus of villagers delighted with their own astuteness.

About the time the village was talking in this way the boy's mother sat up one night darning the stockings for the seven pairs of feet that trod the pathway of life by her side, long after the owners of the said feet were in the land of dreams, and, before laying her own tired head on the pillow, she took her tallow candle, climbed the steep narrow steps to the garret just under the shingles, and shading the light from the many draughts that made it flicker, gazed earnestly down at her wonderful "b'y."

"He's goin' ahead av 'em all in school, God bless him!" she murmured, while her bosom swelled with pride and mother-love, and a smile chased all the care from her thin anxious face. "It's mesilf could stand here fur a hour an' look at him widout tirin', the beauty! What am I that I should be the

"She gazed earnestly down at her wonderful b'y."

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mother of such a wonderful b'y? The beatin' av me heart! The apple av me eye! Me crown av rejoicin'! Oh, Mary McClosky, but ye've r'ason to be the proud woman this day!"

At this point the boy stirred in his sleep and muttered, "The masther expects it av me . . . . an' Mrs. McShane expects it av me, an' the little one's pa an' ma . . . an' all av 'em. . . . It would be a crying shame to disappoint 'em all. . . . I must try what I kin do." And he gathered his brows into a slight frown, scratched his tousled head, and turned away from the light.

"Whisht! he's afther stirrin'—the pretty!" whispered his mother, and she tiptoed out of the room, stole down the steep steps, and going over to the great basket of stockings, she added: "I feel able fur a little more now, an' it's afther lyin' awake I'd be anyway, I'm that carried away."

So rummaging among the pile, she found a pair of the boy's socks, with toes and heels almost obliterated, and sat down to mend them.

No artist ever thrilled and glowed over his masterpiece more than did that mother, as she dreamed her dreams and built her castles, while she drew together the frayed edges of her boy's old socks.

The Village Helper, many an early winter morning when she was coming home from a night's vigil by a sick-bed, saw the light of the tallow candle in the small attic room in McClosky's house. And in the summer months the occupant of the room was up with the earliest bird, and out under the crab-apple tree, the one shady spot in the small inclosure around the house, stretched at full length, his head in his hands, his elbows resting on the ground, and a book before him.

After a while, McClosky's boy got to where the village school could carry him no further, and the schoolmaster grew deeply concerned as to the lad's future.

What occurred during the summer did not become known to every one, but in the early part of October the boy set off for a higher institution of learning.

I remember very well the day he started. If he had been some great potentate taking his leave the village could not have shown a livelier interest. Mrs. Murray sat in her bay window, and waved her handkerchief as he passed. The schoolmaster gave an extra recess to the children, and stood in the door of the schoolhouse, shading his eyes with one hand and swinging the other over his head.

The men came out of their shops and shouted a cheery word, and Mrs. Brady, Mrs. McShane, and the other women made some excuse to get down to the train.

The boy himself looked well and happy, notwithstanding his tweed suit was cut down by the Village Helper from one that Squire Murray had given out of his own wardrobe and would have been regarded with contempt by a city clerk.

"I don't know how the rest of you feel about it," said the schoolmaster to me after the boy was finally off, "but, as for my share in it, I never spent money more to my own satisfaction, nor money that I feel will yield me better interest. He's got a fair start now, the stuff is in him, and our grand Canadian educational system will do the rest."

After this I traveled abroad and lost sight of McClosky's boy for a number of years.

Returning one summer in early May, I noticed when the train drew into the usually quiet depot, that there was some unwonted stir. The brass band—for the village had grown to that dignity—was out playing a martial air, and it seemed to me all the village was on hand. Prominent among those on the little station platform stood the village school-

master, talking and gesticulating as I had never before seen him talk and gesticulate. I looked around for some important personage in whose honor this demonstration might be arranged, but when the train came to a full stop no one alighted save a tall young man and myself.

As this youth stepped out of the car ahead of me, cheer after cheer rent the air, and a dozen hands were reached out to clasp his, but I noticed that the old gray schoolmaster got the first shake.

The brass band struck up "The Maple Leaf Forever," and a procession, headed by the schoolmaster and the young man, marched off up the main street.

"What is this all about?" I inquired of the first acquaintance with whom I shook hands, and who happened to be Mrs. Brady.

"The new mimber—McClosky's boy," she replied proudly.

"McClosky's boy!" I exclaimed.

"The same! McClosky's boy, he's mimber fur our county, no less. An' him just turned his twinty-fifth year! A second Gladstone we're having amongst us, so says the schoolmaster. Ah! but it's the proud ould man that same master is to-night who taught the

boy his A. B. C. and gev him the push. An' it's a proud ould woman his mother has r'ason to be, sittin' to-night in the bran-new house he built her. An' poor Jerry, who kilt himself entirely wid the whisky—an' by the same token they tell me the boy is dead sot on timperance, and who kin blame him?—it's himself's touched nather tobaccy nor whisky—his father, it's enough to make him rise from the cold grave, so it is. An', indade, it's all av us is carried away this night by the honor that is bein' put upon us."

All this important intelligence Mrs. Brady communicated to me with scarcely a pause for breath.

Just at that point the brass band, which had been silent for a few moments, the procession keeping step to the regularly recurring throbs of the drum, struck up "Our Own Canadian Home," and Mrs. Brady hurried off to join the throng of men, women and children running after it.

The procession marched up the main street until it came to a short cross street on which the new McClosky residence was situated, then, led by the schoolmaster, it turned up this street.

When he came opposite the house conspic-

uous for its newness, McClosky's boy was the first to see the thin anxious face pressed against the front window-pane, and he saluted his mother by swinging his hat around his closely cropped head.

There was a perceptible change in the expression of the face at the window, the mouth dropped at the corners, and there were indications that the full mother-heart might find expression in tears. But at this moment the men in the procession who had seen the boy salute his mother made the air reverberate with three hearty British cheers.

At the sound of the cheers the careworn, anxious face was surprised into a smile, and the little Irishwoman, "dressed in her black silk," rose from her rocking-chair, and courtesied until the procession passed out of sight around the corner.

It was approaching the small hours when the villagers retired that night, too proud to sleep in the consciousness of having a real live member of Parliament in their midst, and he one of their own raising.

CRAZY TIM.

CRAZY TIM.

T was said that there were no less than forty religious sects to be found within a radius of twenty miles around Mapleton, yet there were only three church edifices in the village, viz.: the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian. When the "Saints," or the "Disciples," or any of the other sects held a meeting among us they had perforce to rent a room or pitch a tent.

For lack of livelier entertainment we all went at least once to hear each sect propound its peculiar doctrines.

You would sometimes find even Mrs. Murray on a front seat, fashionably dressed and sweetly perfumed, the pink of neatness and daintiness, looking perhaps a little bored, and distressed by the heat and closeness. And there

too would be Jerry McClosky on the back seat, in a blue swallow-tail coat with brass buttons—brought from Ireland many years before, and kept for dress occasions—a little top-heavy, more than a little untidy, but always and everlastingly in good humor. There also would be Miss Grimshaw, her wide plume-laden hat obstructing the view of those in her rear, and, with an eye to appearance, her skirt outspread gracefully, occupying as much space as possible. And there would be McClosky's boy sitting on the rusty stove tailor-fashion, with his almost brimless hat under him, regardless of comfort, or appearance, trying to squeeze himself into the smallest possible compass to make room for others;—this was in his adventurous days. There would be old Peter McKim, leaning on his staff, with his eyes screwed up, on the alert for doctrinal errors. And the "Glad Soul," with "a light above the light of setting suns" in her face, finding a grain of truth in each one of the discourses, and listening unmoved to what did not fall in with her views.

"I can pray for 'em all," I heard her say once—"Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopals, Saints, Disciples, an' all the rest of 'em." Then looking off toward the galaxy of stars, for we were coming home from an evening meeting,

she murmured, as though talking to the invisible Presence—

"Nor bounds, nor climes, nor creed thou know'st,
Wide as our need Thy favors fall ;
The white wings of the Holy Ghost
Stoop, seen or unseen, o'er the heads of all."

And there in fact would be all the rest of the village, squeezed inside the large square room dignified with the name of hall, where they roasted, and perspired, and breathed for a couple of hours at a time—not the perfume of a thousand flowers, but the peppermint-scented goose grease wherewith Crazy Tim's mother preserved the youthful luxuriance of her locks, and various other grades of perfume, from Miss Grimshaw's musk to Mrs. Murray's White Rose.

The Episcopal edifice bore the humble title of Christ Church, a name given it by a venerable bishop when it was built, in the early days. It was a small Gothic structure, with infinitesimal windows, insuring the "dim religious light" dear to the mystical worshiper. Around it stood a few ancient weather-stained tombstones bearing such feminine names as "Patience," "Obedience," "Meekness," the former owners of the names lying beside their lords and masters toward whom these virtues were supposed to have been exercised.

It was a long time since those women lived and moved and had their being among mortal men, and, consequently, their graves were objects of great interest to our summer visitors.

One summer the young lady worshipers who attended this church, after some consultation among themselves, came to the conclusion that their place of worship was decidedly too plain, not to say shabby, and although there was no carpet on the floor, nor cushions on the seats, it was the unanimous opinion of these young people that a Brass Cross—I write it in capitals, for so it stood out in their mind's eye—would do more than anything else to give the place a distinguished appearance.

One of their number had been in the city and had seen a Brass Cross in a church there, and her description of it had been so glowing that it seemed as if nothing short of a similar adornment could bring happiness or peace of mind to the fair communicants of Christ Church. Accordingly they went to work, with the zeal worthy of so good a cause, to give effect to their decision.

Candy was made and peddled from door to door, so toothsome that no one could resist it, while flower-seeds, cut-flowers, and bulbs

tempted another class of purchasers. Thus in an incredibly short time twenty-five dollars, the price of the Cross—for a deputation of fair maids had taken advantage of Dominion Day's excursion to go to the city and find out—was in the hands of the dealer, and the Brass Cross in the possession of the delighted young ladies.

It was a mixed congregation which worshiped at Christ Church and graded all the way from Mrs. McGibbon, who appeared every Sabbath in silk, and spent every summer at the seaside, to the poorest servant lass whose best gown was a calico, well ironed by her own brown hands, and who never gravitated beyond the precincts of her own township; and from the learned pedagogue of the village school to the poor, eccentric lad whose weak-mindedness earned for him the sobriquet of "Crazy Tim."

With maternal solicitude to see him grow up in the right way, Crazy Tim's mother had taken him to church as soon as his small legs were able to carry him, and when he grew to years of manhood, true to the predictions of the wisest of men, he did not depart from the habit of his childhood, and there was not a more faithful attendant of the church services than Crazy Tim.

Where the Sugar Maple Grows.

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning in July when the Brass Cross first made its appearance in the little village church. About four feet in height, it leaned against the wall, right in front of every one who walked up the center aisle, shining as only polished brass can shine.

But—would you believe it?—some of the congregation did not like it. They had heard some talk about it when the money for its purchase was being gathered, but had paid little attention or given the matter very little thought until the cross appeared before them in all its glittering splendor, a thing of beauty, it could not be denied, but, alas! not a joy forever, as could be read in more than one countenance present that morning.

As soon as the service was over the congregation gathered in little groups to discuss the matter. The young ladies looked beamingly into each other's faces and said: "Isn't *it* lovely?" Out in the churchyard, however, there was not such unanimity of opinion. Some of the older heads saw no harm in it—"If the young folks enjoyed it let 'em hev it;" but Ben Stoner, who must have been influenced by inherited prejudices—his antecedents since the time of Cromwell had been Presbyterians, and he only joined the Episcopal Church to please his wife

—was decidedly against it. And Sam Weller, whose grandmother was a Quaker, sided with Ben. And Mrs. Johnson said if there was any more of "*that*," leaving the hearer to decide what was included in the emphatic pronoun, she would leave the church, even if she had to go to the Methodists. And old Peter McKim said, "They'll be gettin' the candles next."

Poor Crazy Tim walked in and out among the people, listening to all this with a dazed look in his wide blue eyes, as if it were too much for his comprehension.

The next Sabbath morning when the Congregation reassembled for worship the Cross was missing.

Great was their consternation. Search and inquiry were made everywhere, but to no avail.

Days passed into weeks, and conjectures deep and wide were indulged in by the whole village, but nothing seemed to lead any nearer to the missing Cross. And "the fuss among the 'Piscopals," as it was denominated by the dissenting part of the village, threatened to become serious.

In the autumn of that year a type of low malarial fever prevailed in the village, and Dr. Thompson, the faithful clergyman of Christ Church, had "his hands full," in the village

phraseology, attending the sick of his congregation.

While going his rounds the intelligence reached him that Crazy Tim was among the fever stricken. As a good shepherd attends first to the weaklings of the flock the doctor repaired at once to the home of poor Crazy Tim, a tumble-down frame building at the outskirts of the village.

Ushered in by the faithful mother he found Tim prostrate on his couch, pale and emaciated, but there was a look in his eye such as had never been seen there before. Dr. Thompson saw it at once—a clear intelligence, as though the spirit had somehow burst the bond which the hitherto strong body had imposed upon it, and for the first time was looking out on the world and the things thereof with unhampered vision.

The doctor sat by the bedside and talked for a while about the weather, and the crops, and such things as he thought might interest the invalid ; then, as was his wont before leaving, he read short portions of scripture. "If we confess our sins," smoothly and softly read the good man, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Tim listened, but said nothing. The minis-

ter left, but all afternoon at intervals Tim kept repeating to himself, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive."

"Law, Tim," said his mother, who could stand it no longer, fearing he was distressing himself, "don't bother yer head about that, you hain't got no sins to confess. You was alwus the innorcentest, peacefulest lad in the village. To be sure," she added after a moment's pause, "the prayer-book do say we are all miserable sinners. . . . But then He said Himself that except ye become as leetle children ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom. An' you hev alwus been a leetle child, Tim—es innorcent, an' es trustin';" and the good woman felt almost wrathy at the good doctor for seeming to imply that her boy was anything else.

That night Tim seemed to be better, and went to sleep early, and the mother took the opportunity to get a little sleep herself. As midnight approached, however, he was wide awake, and, rising on his elbow, he eagerly scanned the face of his mother who was lying on a cot near him, and assured himself that she was asleep. Then he rose softly from his bed, silently donned a few garments much the worse for wear and stole from the house.

It was a warm September night, the moon

shone clearly, and with a firm, elastic tread unlike the former shambling gait of poor Crazy Tim, he went straight toward the canal which ran through the heart of the village.

Mrs. Brady, who was up late "gettin' a quilt out av the frame," going to the window saw him, and wondering "what divilment that lad was up to that hour av the night," determined to follow him.

Reaching the canal, he stood in the middle of the bridge, underneath which the water was the deepest, and, divesting himself of his few garments, he put his hands together above his head after the manner of divers and plunged deftly into the water. In a few seconds he rose again blowing the water from his mouth and struggling with some burden in his arms. He drew his burden to land, and in the clear moonlight Mrs. Brady, who was a distant witness of all this, saw distinctly the shimmer of the Brass Cross. Hastily resuming his garments, Tim shouldered the cross and went straight toward the church, Mrs. Brady following discreetly in the rear.

When he reached the building he went to a window which evidently he knew was not securely fastened, and raising it he crawled in, dragging the Brass Cross after him.

"Tim shouldered the cross and went straight toward the church."—*Page 140.*

"The young villyan!" said the indignant Mrs. Brady as she strode home, "an' every one thinkin's him es innocent es a babe! I'll be up too early fur him in the mornin', an' them 'Piscopals will know the lad he is! He thinks, now, no un'll know it!"

But Mrs. Brady, tired out with her unwonted exertions, slept late the next morning, and the sexton of Christ Church going early to the building, for it was the Sabbath day, found the Brass Cross set up in its old place against the wall, and prostrate before it the lifeless form of Crazy Tim, his rigid arms clinging to its base, his one conscious sin thus openly confessed.

After that the Brass Cross bore a new meaning to the congregation of Christ Church, and with one consent they agreed to let it remain.

"THE MAN WITH THE HOE."

"THE MAN WITH THE HOE."

HE man with the hoe he literally was during all the summer part of the year. So soon as spring blew her vivifying breath over our lawns and flower-beds, and mellowed our cornfields and potato-patches, no man in the village was in such demand as he, for none of us felt we could make our garden aright without him.

We all ran after him at the same time, each hoping, as is the way of human nature, to get the start of the others and have his garden planted first. But it was beautiful to see how, with all due humility and yet with unswerving firmness, he exercised the nicest sense of justice between his patrons.

He divided his working hours in the height

of the rush, spending a portion of time on 'Squire Murray's hotbeds, while the 'Squire in broadcloth and white linen looked admiringly on; and an equal portion on the Widow McShane's potato-patch, he making the holes with his hoe, while the widow followed him, dropping in the seed potatoes. No one, not even the most jealous of us, could honestly complain of being neglected.

I can picture him standing in somebody's little plot of ground singing softly and keeping time with the strokes of his hoe:

> "A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
> He's building a palace for me over there!
> Though exile from home, yet still I may sing,
> All glory to God, I'm a child of the King!"

There was no strain of melancholy in this, no hint of resignation to the inevitable, such as you might hear at times when it is sung at some of our devotional meetings, when one could readily imagine that, away below the exultant words, the real self of the singer was wailing in minor key: "Do my best, I cannot get a palace here; so, as the next best thing, I'll be resigned to wait for one over there."

He had a smooth English voice, which never seemed to rise to a harsh or loud tone, and,

unless you were very near him, you would not catch his words, but only the low melodious sound.

His face was weather-beaten. How could it be otherwise when the sun and wind and rain of many years had had free play upon it? His hands were horny and knotted, and had permanently taken somewhat of the shape they habitually assumed in grasping the shovel and hoe. There was a stoop to his broad shoulders for the same reason. Constant toil had left its impress on his very form, but after all only the shell was marred by these influences.

There were manifest limitations to his intellectual nature. He seemed to have no inclination to dig deeply into the philosophy of Plato, and the "swing of the Pleiades" gave him little concern, but his spiritual flights no man could measure.

He found it necessary in the planting season to work early and late, counting his time by the hour, and sometimes before his employer had risen in the morning he might hear his man with the hoe, if his work brought him anywhere near the bedroom window, singing in his low smooth voice:

"Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run!

Shake off dull sloth, and early rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice."

He seemed to have an inexhaustible store of hymns at his command, and every new feature of his work suggested an appropriate hymn, which he sang with the "passion of eternity" in his voice. Get him planting a tree, and presently you would hear him singing of the tree of life blooming in the sweet fields of Eden. Start him mowing the lawn, and as the fragrant green grass fell before his onward march, there floated out on the air:

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between."

When the time of the singing of birds had come, and Spring, with her softness and sunshine and wondrous beauty, was touching souls far less responsive than his, if you wandered in his vicinity, you would hear, through the soft showers of falling blossoms, mingled with the song of the robin:

"The flowery spring, at thy command,
Embalms the air and paints the land;
The summer rays with vigor shine
To raise the corn and cheer the vine."

When the glory of autumn was upon us, and

through the mystic purple the golden harvests were being gathered, with, it seemed to me, an added note of exultation, he would sing :

" By Him the clouds drop fatness,
The deserts bloom and sing,
The hills leap up in gladness,
The valleys laugh and ring ;
He filleth with His fulness
All things with large increase,
He crowns the year with gladness
With plenty and with peace."

He was a lover of flowers. The purpling violet and reddening rose filled him with ecstasy. He handled them all with peculiar tenderness, as if they were sentient things, and it seemed to hurt him to see any one trample on them or treat them ruthlessly. And while he toiled, and trained, and trimmed among them, his voice accompanied his hands with :

" The morning flowers display their sweets
And gay their silken leaves unfold."

Digging an excavation for the foundation of a house suggested to him :

" My father's house is built on high,
Far, far above the starry sky ;
Its glittering towers the sun outshine,
That heavenly mansion shall be mine."

On one occasion when I came upon him

singing—he would seldom sing unless when he thought himself alone—I said :

" John, do you never have the blues ? Do you ever doubt or despair ? "

With a faint smile, like a gleam of sunshine on his bronzed face, he replied :

" I've no time for them."

Then I remembered the words of a wise man : " Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony the instant he sets himself to work. Doubt, desire, sorrow, remorse, indignation, despair itself, all these, like hell-dogs, lie beleaguering the soul of the poor day-workers, as of every man, but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink, murmuring, afar off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of labor in him, is it not a purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright, blessed flame."

During one spring some business brought a socialist agitator to the home of 'Squire Murray. He was standing with me on the wide piazza, and seeing the man with the hoe at a short distance in the squire's garden bending over his work, he quoted, with much apparent feeling :

" O peasant delving in the stubborn soil,
What solace has this mother earth for thee,
Gaining thy bread through years of bitter toil,
Contented, like the cattle, just to be?"

The words had scarcely dropped from his tongue, when the object of his pity and scorn began to sing :

" Oh, the goodness of God
In employing a clod
His tribute of glory to raise!
His standard to bear,
And with triumph declare
His unspeakable riches of grace."

The clearness of the atmosphere or some freak of the wind brought the words distinctly to our hearing. We looked at each other, and the socialist changed countenance.

The weird sweetness of the voice of the peasant singer, along with the words, strangely touched the hot spirit of the man, burdened with the world's troubles. To cover his confusion, he turned and walked to the other end of the piazza, and it seemed to me the next breeze brought on its wings the message of the Concord sage : " When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn."

OUR WHITE-HAIRED BOY.

OUR WHITE-HAIRED BOY.

"BLESSED be childhood for the good that it does, and for the good which it brings about carelessly and unconsciously, by simply making us love it," I often quoted, as the village children trooped by my cottage to school or sat about in the sunny spots, those who were too small for school gravely making dandelion chains wherewith to decorate their own small persons.

Among them were "wee laddies" in sailor suits, with letters on their cap-bands, proclaiming in flaunting gilt that their owners were in Her Majesty's naval service.

I noticed that when one boy appeared thus gloriously capped, every boy of a similar size who could persuade his mother into the extravagance must needs follow suit; so that by

the time the summer was well advanced the crew of the ship of war "Victoria" made no mean show in our village.

There were also little maidens in white starched pinafores, who looked keenly at their playmates' pinafore to see how it compared with their own. Every extra frill or bit of lace was regarded as an advantage not to be slightly considered; and no fine ladies at the capital studied each other's imported costumes more jealously than did those little village maidens the pinafores of their companions.

Some small specimens of femininity took pride in their stiff short braids of hair tied with bright ribbons, which bobbed up and down when they walked, while others looked coyly out at you from a wilderness of curls.

There were the McClosky youngsters, so many of them and so near of an age that they did not feel the need of other company, who came daily, and clung with their bare toes to my front paling, trying to peep over at my flowers, reminding me with their wide Irish mouths of a row of young robins. I found myself more than once throwing berries at them just to see the mouths open. And there were the funny little pickaninnies of "Black Bess," as we called our only colored woman, with

their big rolling eyes and perpetually flashing teeth.

Merry, rollicking, mischief-loving little elves most of the children were, but out of the depths of gingham sunbonnets, and from under "cows-breakfast" hats there oft peeped at me little seraph faces on which I could not look without being reminded that One who spake with authority said:

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The pet child of the village, however, was Bennie, the one treasure of his widowed mother. He was the dearest little mystery, sometimes with the wise face of a philosopher, sitting so very still and musing in such deep abstraction that you would feel like snatching him up and kissing the thought and care from his baby face; and again with the merriest, roundest, most dimpled child-face you could imagine, romping among the wildest.

He was very fair, with the white fairness of the pearl or the lily, and had violet blue eyes, with such a curious wide comprehensive gaze that I never looked into them without thinking of Wordsworth's words: "Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

He never skipped or hopped as a means of locomotion, as many children are in the habit

of doing, but walked gravely along, erect and dignified, like a tiny judge.

His young mother, stricken of all that life held dear except himself, had brought him up in such an atmosphere of love he did not seem to know the meaning of a harsh word, and simply looked surprised when he heard one. He loved everything and everything loved him. There was not an insect or creeping thing which he would not pet and fondle, and you might often, when he was unaware of your presence, hear him talking lovingly to a toad or bumblebee, or perhaps he would have a "furry" caterpillar in the palm of his chubby little hand, stroking it gently down with the front finger of the other hand and talking to it wisely all the time. His soliloquies and dialogues with some imaginary being or some bird or insect were the talk of the village, and his many wise speeches made the sages oft exchange glances and shake their heads, as if they would say, "He is too good for this world."

Everybody had a kind word for him when they encountered him at his play, or met him, as, with his little velvet cap pushed back from his brow, and a look of earnestness on his baby face, he trotted on some little errand for his mother. And I have seen the faces of the

grossest men in the village change, as though they felt their impurities heavy upon them, when they glanced into the pure, open countenance of the sinless child.

There was only one place that Bennie's mother would allow him to go for ten minutes out of her sight—for he was only "three, goin' on four," as he told everybody who was interested enough to inquire—and that was to Sunday-school. She and the teacher of the infant class had been lifelong friends, and she trusted her as she would trust no one else.

To see the crowd that flocked out of the infant-class room every Sunday afternoon you would think all the little children in the village were there, and you would not be far astray.

The teacher, as the "Village Helper" said, "had a knack o' gittin' on wi' young uns," and so well was her skill known in the village that she went all the time by the name, "Teacher." She was also a natural musician, and took her guitar to Sunday-school to accompany the singing, which comprised a large part of the exercises. The children were charmed, and told each other about it during the week, and almost every child in the village under a certain age tormented his mother until he was allowed, no

matter what were his parents' denominational predilections, to attend the Sunday afternoon infant class, occasionally at least.

" Teacher," on one occasion during a visit to the capital, saw a city teacher picnicking with her class in one of the city parks, and she came home possessed with the idea of making a picnic for her class.

All who attended even once she considered eligible for an invitation, which meant that well-nigh every family in the village was interested in the picnic. The housekeepers vied with each other in preparations for it. Jane Bender, hearing of it, sent in a roll of her gilt-edge butter, all of which the " Village Helper " made up into sandwiches with a ham she had smoked herself. There were pies and cakes, and preserves, and pickles of infinite variety. Even the " Deespensation," although she did not approve of picnics, and thought children should not taste pickles, sent a jar of her best pickled peaches.

It was the bluest of summer days when " Teacher," with two young lady assistants, landed her flock about a mile outside the village on the bend of the river.

The dead calmness of the water was here broken by a gentle ripple, and pale-green

trembling reflections smiled up into the great willows which followed the curves of the quiet river.

Some tall elms, with their nameless grace, towered above the willows, while a few majestic oaks and walnuts farther out on the bank afforded sufficient protection from the ardor of the summer sun and added grandeur to the scene. Golden buttercups, white-winged daisies, and purple clover-blossoms nodded everywhere in the lush grass, as if welcoming the children to their company.

They were all there—the sailor caps, and the white starched pinafores; the stiff bobbing braids, and the wildernesses of curls; the McClosky children in full force, and the pickaninnies of Black Bess; the merry rollicking youngster, and the little angel-face. And among the rest, Bennie.

Lunch was spread in due time on the turf under a great oak and the children gathered around the two tablecloths covered with good things, while some thirty shrill little voices, in a rather go-as-you-please fashion, piped with all the fervor of their childish voices (the more greedy of them, I must admit, keeping their eyes fixed on the cherry pie and frosted cake):

"Be present at our table, Lord,
Be here and everywhere adored;
These creatures bless, and grant that we
May feast in Paradise with thee."

A squirrel on his way to his store-house with a morsel in his mouth dropped it and raised his front paw in a listening attitude, and the birds hushed their own song as this new music echoed up among the tree-tops rising like sweet incense to heaven.

After lunch, which was enjoyed to the full, not one dish being left untouched, the children scattered to pursue their favorite pastimes. Some picked great armfuls of flowers and sat all afternoon in the long grass arranging them into bouquets and garlands. Some ran far afield, listening with dilated eyes to the mysterious rapping of the woodpecker, mocking the querulous catbird in the thicket and the cawing crows far over the tree-tops; chasing the chipmunk and the squirrel, and searching in the ground for the bobolink's nest. Others were attracted by the water and went as near its edge as they were allowed. Lulled to quietness by the peace of the river they silently watched the changing light and shade on its surface and the occasional fish which darted up from the depths into the sunlight, or they looked

wonderingly at the long-billed marsh-wren as he fussed in and out among the coarse grass and rushes, at the daintily stepping snipe wading by the water's edge, and the water-thrush perched on a long wet log, jerking his tail as if in protest against this unwonted intrusion.

Bennie was among the latter group. The water fairly fascinated him, and he ran tirelessly all afternoon along the river's marge, talking softly to the birds and flowers, and to everything that came in his way.

The long afternoon was drawing to a close, the sun was dipping down behind the willows in a sea of molten gold, when "Teacher" began to gather her flock to go home. They were standing in line, and on being counted it was found that one was missing. At first no one could think who it was, but at last Teacher exclaimed, "It is Bennie." They thought he had remained behind lost in his play, and search was at once made for him. Some ran along the river's edge, the haunt of the marsh-wren and the water-thrush, and some sought the knoll where the bobolink's nest was found, and some went to the chipmunk tree, and others where the buttercups grew the thickest, and so they scattered everywhere, calling

"Bennie! Bennie!" But no answer came to their call.

A cold fear began to creep around the heart of "Teacher" and her assistants, their steps became more hurried, and their manner more excited; they ran this way and that, calling more loudly, "Bennie! Bennie!" But, alas! no Bennie responded. Then they looked desperately into each other's eyes, and with one accord went to the river and gazed strainingly into its dark waters, but there was not a ripple on its surface, nor anything to indicate a tragedy.

At last it was decided that the assistants were to take the children home while "Teacher" would stay behind to continue the search for Bennie.

But just as they were about to start Bennie's mother appeared over the hill. She had thought it about time for them to be coming; her heart was yearning for her boy, as he had been longer out of her sight than ever before, and so she started out to meet them.

It fell upon "Teacher" to tell her that Bennie could not be found. Not a sound escaped the mother's lips when she heard the intelligence, but she clasped her hands and stood gazing

fixedly at the terribly placid river as though she were turned to stone.

The assistants went on home with the children, leaving "Teacher" and Bennie's mother on the desolate spot which a short time before had rung with merriment.

McClosky's boy, who had wandered down half an hour before for a little recreation—this was in his student days—had run back to the village and carried the news. The women hurried thither in flocks, and several boat-loads of men rowed down the river. Two of the men bore grappling irons and the bronzed faces of all were filled with anxiety, for each one loved Bennie as if he had been their own.

They spoke not a word, but when they came opposite to where "Teacher" and Bennie's mother were standing on the bank they stopped rowing, threw out their grappling irons and began to drag the bottom of the unresponsive river.

Then for the first time the wild-eyed mother spoke: "Ay, sure enough, drowned—drowned—drowned, my Bennie! my precious!" "Teacher" took her arm and led her away from the sight of the men, down the river-bank. The two women paced the shore back and forth, silent and tearless, for half an hour. Then

something impelled "Teacher" to lead the grief-stricken mother hanging on her arm farther down one time than they had gone before. The twilight had deepened perceptibly, and not a sound broke the awful stillness but the splash of the water when the men cast in the grappling irons.

They had come under a group of trees, and suddenly above their heads a horned owl hooted loudly. The mother shudderingly grasped "Teacher's" arm and seemed about to sink to the ground, when at that moment there floated out on the clear evening air a sweet gurgling laugh.

Both the women recognized at once whence the sound came, and they flew to a spot where the willow branches dipped down more deeply into the water. There an old boat lay close to the shore completely screened by the willows, and, leaning over its side, they beheld Bennie.

He had just awakened from sleep, and was gazing in a rapture of delight at some fireflies circling above him.

The mother snatched him up and clasped him to her heart. "Thank God!" cried "Teacher," and dropped in a heap to the ground, giving way to hysterical tears.

The men on the river, seeing there was some

commotion, rowed quickly in, and the women soon came crowding around. And such is the incomprehensible nature of women, behold, every one of them fell to crying! The men coughed, blew their noses, and walked away with smiling faces.

"Bless the children!" said the Glad Soul, wiping her spectacles, when the good news reached her. "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

EPHRAIM HART'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE MAN O' SIN.

EPHRAIM HART'S ENCOUNTER WITH THE MAN O' SIN.

EPHRAIM LOSES TEN DOLLARS.

PHRAIM HART was a church-member, and a man trusted and respected by the community at large, but he had one weakness—he would trade horses.

"Not that he wants to do anything tricky or double-like," explained his wife Naomi, "he let that go years back when he joined the church, but it seems es tho' when men git a-tradin' o' horses they can't hardly quit it."

The event about which this narrative centers occurred one Fall day that Ephraim went with a grist to the mill. He had to wait all day for the accomplishment of the mysterious process which transformed his wheat into flour, so to

pass the time, he examined the hoppers, and stones, and bolts, which he had examined before, every time he had been at the mill; and completing that examination he was standing around leaning alternately against the lintel of the window and the door jamb, when Joe Cumstock drove up with a team—a bay and a sorrel.

The sorrel was a pretty creature, and Ephraim having nothing to do, that personage represented as always being on the alert for idlers attacked him at his weakest point.

"That's a purty sorrel o' yourn, Joe," he said to the owner of the animal.

"That she is," said Joe, seeing his chance.—The mare had some nasty tricks.

Ephraim stepped down from the door, walked all around the sorrel, feeling her joints and tendons, looking critically at her feet, last of all opening her mouth and examining her teeth.

Joe said nothing, indeed seemed to be thinking of something else.

"How'll ye trade, Joe?" said Ephraim, his eye growing brighter, the color deepening in his swarthy brow and cheek, and that craze for excitement which is felt in a greater or less degree by every gambler the wide world over,

be he trading horses in a country village or stacking his thousands at the Stock Exchange, tingling his entire being.

"I've no fault to find with the sorrel," said Joe slowly, as though having some trouble in bringing his mind down to the consideration of such a mundane affair.

"I was jest a-thinkin' o' them there stars," he added irrelevently, "they're saying as how they're a-findin' of a new star."

Joe's interest in stars was of very recent development. On his way to the mill he had heard the village schoolmaster, who belonged to the Toronto Astronomical Association, make some remark about this new star, and to show his indifference to the question of parting with the sorrel, he thought it a proper time to air his recently acquired knowledge.

When he had made his remark, he upended a bag of wheat lying in his wagon, hoisted it on his shoulder, and walked into the mill.

"What do ye say to tradin' fer my bay?" said Ephraim when Joe came out of the mill, growing more interested when the latter showed such perfect indifference, "he'll jest match yourn thet ye hev here."

This was just what Joe wanted, but taking

a second bag on his shoulder he said, "I've nothin' agin the sorrel whatsomever," and went into the mill again.

The result was, when the two men parted, each with his flour, and shorts and bran in his wagon, Ephraim Hart had the sorrel and Joe Cumstock had Ephraim's bay.

As Ephraim jogged along the country road toward home he did not feel as happy as he expected over his bargain; he could scarcely have explained to anyone else the reason of his dissatisfaction. A great lonesomeness came over him for the bay horse. He had raised it from a colt, and though it bore the distinguished name of Pompey, it was still called "the colt" in the familiar talk around home.

"'Twas a weeny bit o' creetur when its mother died an' I begen a-feedin' o' it milk with a bottle," he said to himself. "Man, didn't he grow fond o' me, that colt! He'd foller me 'round the hull farm." Ephraim gulped as if swallowing something large.

A soft Indian-summer haze was flooding the landscape, the dying breath of summer permeated the air, and as he drove through a belt of woods a plaintive cry of some wild bird smote upon his ear, and somehow stirred his sensibilities or disturbed his nerves.

"It's this plaguey soft, good-fer-nothin' weather that's the matter with me—or that blamed bird," he added angrily, forgetting he was a church member.

He recalled all the pranks and cunning ways of the colt, and wondered how he ever could have have had the heart to part with him.

"I'm a fool an' a backslider!" he said in a louder tone than he had spoken before, turning his head to one side and addressing a large oak past which his wagon was rumbling at that moment. "A church-member hes no bizness horse-tradin'."

He looked at the sorrel and saw that she carried her ears back, and he remembered that she made an attempt to bite at him when he was untying the halter that hitched her to the post.

"That there is a vicious brute," he said spitefully, giving the reins a jerk. "I recollect now I see it in her eye." Then his lonesomeness for the bay colt increased.

All the long day that Ephraim was at the mill his wife Naomi was in the house alone, and not having much to do, she determined along in the afternoon to have a treat for her husband's supper when he came home. She knew she could put nothing before him he

would like quite so well as custard pie, and "havin' plenty o' eggs an' milk" she proceeded to make one.

She beat up her eggs well, put in the milk, sugar and nutmeg; and making a good firm crust, poured on the custard.

After the pie was placed in the oven she poured in a little more custard, saying reflectively, "He likes his'n thick." Then running to the woodshed she split up a handful of light wood, (Ephraim was sometimes remiss in his duty in this respect) made a brisk fire, and baked the pie to an appetizing turn.

The afternoon was waning by the time the pie was baked, and the baking board and rolling pin returned to their places, yet Ephraim had not come.

So Naomi went out to the corner of the "cookhouse," where, resting one hand on her hip and shading her eyes with the other, she gazed anxiously down the highway.

She had stood there fully ten minutes before she saw the heads of her husband's horses appear over the hill. Her heart gave a great throb when she noticed the change in the team; and at the same instant she saw that the trade had not given satisfaction to Ephraim. The horses were walking with their

heads hanging; and their driver was leaning forward in his seat, his shoulders drawn up and bent, and part of his reins trailing in the dust.

"Land sake!" said Naomi under her breath, "he's been tradin' horses."

With a woman's readiness she could have said volumes when he drove into her presence, but with a woman's tact she said nothing. His "down look" somehow touched her, and determining to do her lecturing at a more opportune time, she continued her preparations for supper.

The kettle on the shining stove was throwing from its tin spout a column of steam sufficient to run a small engine, and she poured some of the bubbling water over the few teaspoonfuls of fragrant tea she had in the teapot. The white cloth was already spread, and most of the dishes were on the table; so she cut the sweet home-made loaf of bread, sliced some of her last cream cheese, filled a white bowl with stewed fruit, raised the butter out of the pail of cool spring water where she had placed it to harden, and last of all brought forth the custard pie.

The latter she placed right in front of Ephraim's plate with a knife across it.

Ephraim came in gloomily, hung his hat on a peg behind the kitchen door, in lieu of a comb drew the fingers of his right hand through the pepper-and-salt locks that immediately surmounted his forehead, and, as Naomi had announced supper, dropped into his place at the foot of the table.

When his wife had taken her place at the opposite end of the table he covered his face with his hand and said "grace." This on any occasion was never very audible, but Naomi noticed that it was more inaudible *this* evening than usual.

After waiting a due amount of time, she also observed that Ephraim was taking no interest in the custard pie, and she began to get frightened.

"When a man can't eat custard pie——" she whispered to herself with tremulous lips.

She was incapable of saying more, and took a sup of tea to cover her emotion.

It was the first time in their united lives that Ephraim had ever refused pie, and knowing his besetment, a great fear crept into her heart that he had been "cheatin'" or "searin' his conscience with some o' them there horse-tradin' tricks." She might have thought it a case of typhus, as she afterwards confided to a

friend, if it had not been for the knowledge that the sorrel was in the stable.

With an anxious look in her pale blue eye, she reached the full length of the table, nervously picked up the custard pie, cut a piece to show its thickness, and rising from her seat she went down and offered it to her husband.

Looking absently beyond her, Ephraim took the pie from her hand and set it down on the table without helping himself to a piece.

Naomi could stand it no longer and exclaimed.

"Ephraim, what be the matter with ye?"

Having the question thus put directly to him he felt obliged to answer it, and with his eyes fastened on his plate he said:

"I've made a fool o' myself, Naomy, an' traded off the bay colt fer Joe Cumstock's sorrel mare. I wouldn't give that bay colt fer two o' the sorrel now," he added with a catch in his voice.

"Git Joe to trade back," said Naomi promptly.

Ephraim brightened a little at this suggestion; he had not thought of that possibility before. However, notwithstanding Naomi's further solicitation, he refused to take any of

the custard pie (it seems natural to want to punish the body for the sin of the spirit), ate some bread without any butter, swallowed his cup of Japan tea, and went outdoors.

Naomi, watching through the window, saw him put a halter on the sorrel and lead her off in the direction of Joe Cumstock's farm.

As soon as Ephraim was around the concession corner, and away from under Naomi's sharp eyes (he loved sympathy, the distance was fully a mile, and he wanted her to think he had to walk all the way), he concluded to mount the sorrel. But when he made the attempt she bit at him viciously, and at last when he had succeeded in seating himself (Ephraim was still agile, and prided himself on knowing how to manage a horse), by some contortion of the body hitherto unknown to the farmer she immediately threw him.

"She be a play-actor," he said bitterly, rising from his prostrate position on the ground and brushing off the dust, "an' not fit fer a respectable, moral man to ride."

There was no help for him then but to walk mildly before the sorrel, leading her by the halter, in the meanwhile watching closely that she did not take a bite out of his shoulder or the crown of his hat.

Oh, the humiliation of it, and he an official member of the church in the village!

As he walked along he saw a hawk soaring high above his head carrying in its talons a chicken which was uttering piteous cries, and he felt his heart go out strangely toward that poor undone chicken. He had never thought of chickens before unless as a consideration for pot-pie.

"I wisht I hed my gun here," he muttered between set teeth, "an' I'd soon bring down that foul bird o' prey."

A little further along the quiet country road he heard the frightened squeal of a frog which was being pursued and overtaken by a garter-snake, and throwing the halter of the sorrel across a tall stump, he went to the rescue of the frog and killed the snake.

Ephraim had never before taken so much interest in the lower creation, and to excuse himself to himself he said aloud:

"Them there creetures that makes their livin' by gittin' the best o' other creetures I take no stock in."

Daylight was near gone when he reached Joe Cumstock's farm. He went at once to the stable and inquired for Joe. The bay colt, which was tied within the stable, hearing his

voice whinnied, and if Ephraim had any hesitation about getting him back at any cost at that moment it vanished.

It was after eleven o'clock that night when he got home, riding the bay colt bareback, and looking happy.

The next morning at breakfast he told Naomi he had to give Joe ten dollars to trade back. Joe asked fifteen dollars, but by eleven o'clock at night he had talked him down to ten.

HIS ATTEMPT TO RECOVER HIS LOSS.

PHRAIM HART was what the neighbors called a "clost" man. It hurt him sorely to part unnecessarily with even a copper, and he was in the habit of lamenting with great bitterness of heart when guilty of such an imprudence. His wife being an even-tempered woman was somewhat of a check upon him when he was in the house.

"Dear me, Ephraim, what's the use o' cryin' over spilt milk," was a favorite saying of hers when her husband began in her presence to indulge his fretfulness. It was only when he got out to the woodshed, or in the barnyard among the unheeding cattle, he could fret without interruption.

The next morning after the horse-trade he rose early and went out to the stable. Drawing aside the wooden bolt he went in.

The previous night threatened to be chilly, and Ephraim, instead of letting the bay colt run at large in the pasture field, put him in

the warm stable. "A valuable colt like this can't be took too much care of," he soliloquized as he tied in a hard knot the colt's halter through a hole in the manger. He knew by past experience that this valuable colt, during the long dark hours when he should be resting, liked to work himself loose, for the purpose of investigating the secrets of the stable and searching out the oat-bin.

With a slap on the colt's flank, and the usual injunction, "Stand over," he entered his stall and passed up to his head.

With grim satisfaction he looked at his young horse, and the great round eyes of the horse looked complacently back at his master.

"I tell yer what, Pompey, ye came near bein' a goner," said Ephraim. "Ain't yer glad to git home agin?"

Pompey recognized the love in the voice—what animal does not?—and replied in the affirmative by mouthing the shoulder of his questioner.

"That there Joe Cumstock," continued Ephraim, "would ha' made his fortin out o' you, tradin' ye off as a fancy beast to be druv by one o' these here coachmen, to draw some o' the gentry 'round the country, an' a nice time uv it ye'd have. That ud be no work for

a horse brought up in the common-senst way you was brought up."

Pompey further agreed to this by seizing Ephraim's hat in his teeth and raising it from his head.

"Here, here," said Ephraim, "that's bein' too familiar, if I did bring ye up on a bottle. I know yer hintin' hard fer oats. I see ye hev yer oat-box half chawed away."

Before he finished the last sentence he was walking toward the back of the stable. Entering a small door he soon returned with a measure full of oats, which he poured into Pompey's box. Then, not having anything else to do, as most of the stock was yet in the fields, he started with great vigor to rub Pompey down with a wisp of pea-straw, congratulating himself aloud as he worked on his good luck in getting him back

Pompey, still munching his oats, turned several times and looked with questioning eyes at his excited master, as if he would say :

"What have I done to merit so much attention ?"

All the while, however, that Ephraim was thus outwardly rejoicing over being once more the owner of the colt, there was, deep down in

his heart, an undercurrent of bitterness which took its rise from the memory of that ten dollar bill he had to give for his recovery.

It was not until after breakfast, when he had come again to the barn to clean some wheat, that this undercurrent got headway and swept all restraints before it.

He had let the colt out of the stable into the pasture-field, thrown a few handfuls of grain to the chickens, pumped some water into the horse trough for the cattle, and then went on to the barn.

"Hang it all! why can't I git quit o' worritin' over that there ten dollars?" he said at last aloud as he threw a half-bushel of wheat into the fanning mill. "No wonder I can't nuther; it takes a man a long while to airn ten dollars."

Here he relieved his pent-up feelings by turning the crank of the fanning-mill with great force the dust whirling out at the back of the mill while the wheat fell in a little mound on the floor in front of it.

"Yes, a long time to airn ten dollars—ef ye hain't got none," he repeated, pausing for breath. Then he put a second half bushel of wheat into the hopper, and went through the same exertion as before.

"'Pears as though a man can't think so hard when he works," he gasped as he finished it. "It do ease one's mind off a bit, no mistake. I will own to it, that them ten dollars hes got to worritin' me bad. How could I 'a 'bin sech a———" He started the crank with great force instead of finishing the sentence.

There were only a few bushels of wheat to clean, and he soon had the task finished. But instead of going on with more of the farm chores, as he should have done, he turned the half-bushel measure up-side down and sat down on it.

Planting his elbows on his knees and resting his chin in his hands, he said emphatically:

"This question hes got to be settled somehow. I can't go worritin' all winter about that ten dollars . . . I'll do without a new overcoat," he said sullenly, after a short reflection.—"But Naomy'll not hear to that," he added immediately; "the elbows is outen the old one. Naomy is terrible particular about some things —holes in elbows an' heels o' socks. Kep' that old coat ten years, an' pears as though it won't last no longer."

He was silent for some time, as though in deep study. Suddenly he jumped to his feet, sending the half-bushel measure on which he

had been seated rolling over the barn floor and exclaimed:

"I hev it! I see what I'll do! I'll save it out o' the church! I hev giv ten dollars a year to that church for over twenty years an' I kin afford it no longer."

He emphasized the last four words by stamping his foot on the barn floor.

"This year anyway," he added in a milder tone, as he thought of Naomi and her determination to "give the Lord his own."

The idea of saving out of the church revived all his good spirits; he started to whistle, and walked with the step of a twenty-year-old man around the barn. He gathered the wheat off the floor into the granary, and taking a home-made broom leaning against the wall in a corner he briskly swept the barn floor.

A modern mental scientist would not have asked for a better example of the power of thought to lighten our burdens or raise us out of sloughs of despond than Ephraim presented at that time. He worked in this mood until the welcome sound of the tin horn announced that Naomi had dinner ready.

During the meal he was unusually hilarious; he told two or three amusing anecdotes, and proposed to Naomi that they should "hitch

up" and go to her sister's that afternoon, a place Naomi had been wanting him to take her for three months.

The custard pie which was left untouched the evening before was on the dinner table and Ephraim ate half of it, saying as he helped himself to the third piece:

"This is the best pie, Naomy, ye ever made."

No wonder therefore that under her drooping eyelids Naomi looked curiously down from the head of the table at her husband and said to herself:

"Ephraim must be growin' in grace, when he ain't takin' the loss o' his ten dollars harder."

After dinner Naomi, having a churning on her hands, decided she could not go to visit her sister, so Ephraim determined to go to the village; he must give expression to his relieved feelings in some way. He and Pompey would have a day of it. He would hitch him to the top buggy and start as soon as possible. He was not sure that he felt very sorry that Naomi could not go. She must know nothing about his intention to keep the money from the church; he felt quite certain she would not approve of it, so it was just as well for him to have that afternoon to celebrate by himself.

Arriving at this decision, he went over to an alcove in the darkest corner of the kitchen, and with one eye on Naomi, who was gathering up and scraping the dinner plates, he stealthily reached to a high shelf, brought down an old cob pipe and slipped it into his pocket.

He had given up smoking when he joined the church, Naomi having persuaded him that it was a useless waste of money, so why not a sin? But he said to himself as he rose from the dinner table:

"What's the use o' so many restrictions? A man must have some recreation. Just this afternoon—Naomy'll never know it."

He had to pass close by Naomi to go out of the kitchen door, and with that cob pipe in his pocket he unconsciously assumed a slinking air when he walked, his broad shoulders seemed to shrink and droop, and his feet dragged on the floor.

Naomi, looking up from her work, noticed this, and with great pity in her heart said:

"Poor Ephraim's hevin' a hard struggle to keep from fallin' into his old besetment of frettin' over the loss of his ten dollars."

This thought brought before her mental vision Joe Cumstock as the source of all Ephraim's troubles, and as she carried the

dinner plates to the kitchen sink she sang in low quavering tones a stanza of an old hymn.

> "Bid me of men beware,
> And to my ways take heed;
> Discern their every secret snare,
> And circumspectly tread."

Ephraim having gone out, hitched up Pompey and started for the village.

When he had gotten well beyond the eyes of Naomi, he drew out the cob pipe, filled it and began to smoke.

"What's the use'n bein' so strict?" he said aloud, as if answering some inward monitor, and he puffed with vigor. He had often heard Naomi say—indeed he had often said himself—that the high calling of the righteous should never be looked upon in the light of a restriction, but he seemed to have forgotten all those precepts.

When he had his pipe well started he tried speeding Pompey along the hard clay road. He had given up horse-racing when he gave up smoking. Naomi had said, and he agreed with her, that "all of 'em savor of the world, the flesh, an' the devil," but now with the pipe in his mouth it seemed natural to give a free rein to Pompey and "hi" at him a few times.

He arrived in the village with such an air of excitement about him that the quiet people on the street stared at him curiously.

"A lively old party," said one lounger to another on the hotel piazza as he passed; it being the farthest from the stranger's imagination that the said party was on ordinary occasions a staid pillar of the church around the corner.

All the while Naomi, alone in the house, was haunted by the memory of Ephraim's appearance as he passed out of the door, so partly as an invocation to Heaven, and partly to raise her spirits, she continued her hymn.

There were eight stanzas, and she had finished the dishes and was rolling out the churn before it was concluded.

Just before the churn-dasher had drowned the words, if you had been passing her open door you might have heard her sweet old voice rising and falling to the words:

"Thus may I pass my days
Of sojourning beneath,
And languish to conclude my race,
And render up my breath."

THE QUARREL OVER THE LINE FENCE.

PHRAIM succeeded in keeping it a profound secret from Naomi that he was not giving his usual contribution to the church.

When it came near the time that it was ordinarily paid, she said several times:

"Ephraim, hev ye paid that church money yet?"

The latter of course had to answer in the negative, with some excuse.

The last time she asked him he said tartly:

"Naomi, why keep tormentin' about that there church money? Hev ye ever known me not to pay it?"

Then Naomi looked curiously at him, wondering was he suffering from indigestion, and resolved to say no more about the money.

This was the first secret Ephraim had kept from his wife, and in the beginning it worried him; but after a while he could look in her

face and answer her questions without a qualm.

The official in the church whose duty it was to receive the contributions, thinking Ephraim was forgetting his usual remittance, took occasion to remind him of it.

They were both driving, and meeting on the country road, the church official drew rein and obliged Ephraim to stop.

When he made known his message, Ephraim said slowly:

"Times is a le-e-tle hard this year. I find I'll hev to retrench an' cut down expenses."

"I heerd ye had a fine crop o' wheat this year, Ephraim."

"There are a great many calls fer all I've got," said Ephraim with a sigh, giving the horse a sharp tip with the whip as the church official was looking the other way.

The horse took the hint and started suddenly, leaving the church official alone on the road.

"There is them that withholdeth an' it tendeth to poverty," said that astonished man, gazing after the flying Ephraim.

He reflected a moment, looking at his whip-handle; then shaking his reins he said: "Go along there!" to his horse, and continued his journey.

After Ephraim had gone at a brisk trot for ten minutes he looked behind him, and seeing no sign of his church brother, he drew rein and

brought Pompey down to a walk. He seemed to want to have a conversation with himself, to argue with some obstinate inner self that would persist in differing very often with his course of action.

It was a beautiful day, and nature herself seemed to unite with that obstinate inner self in opposing the lower Ephraim.

"Yes," he said irritably, as if replying to some assertion, "to be sure I hev a good many mercies. Naomy an' all the children is livin'. To be sure, the children is all gone from us, but they're livin'. We hain't got no bodily ailment as I knows of, outside a tech o' rheumatics, nor there hain't no mortgage on the farm nor stock; an' I *hev* prospered—yes, I own to it, I *hev* prospered; but I've worked hard fer it—it's all my airnin's. Hain't I a right to do as I like with my own? Hain't I a right to keep it?"

He was just entering "echo hollow," a narrow belt of land outlined by a thick wall of woods, about half way between his home and the village. He spoke louder than he knew, and a voice within that mysterious wood instantly responded: "Keep it."

Ephraim turned with a startled look and peered sharply into the depths of the woods.

It seemed to his quickened imagination that there was something ironical in the tone of that voice. A chilly sensation crept down his backbone. Then he jerked himself, sat up straighter, and continued his arguments with that obstinate inner self.

"Yes, the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, I know that."

"Know that," persisted that impertinent bush voice.

The voice seemed to have an irritating instead of a warning influence on him.

"I've worked hard fer it, goodness knows! I can't see how it's all the Lord's money!" he said bitterly.

"The Lord's money!" repeated the bush voice.

This seemed to irritate him still more. Grasping the reins he gave Pompey an almost vicious jerk and had soon left that disagreeable voice and his own disagreeable reflections far behind him.

He speeded Pompey along the country road, a practice which was becoming quite common with him of late, and reached home and Naomi and supper in quite a state of exhilaration.

"Them woods down in the holler is kind o' skeery, the way voices seems to speak out at

ye. One ud think ghosts was there," said Ephraim to his wife that evening when they were preparing to retire.

"Why skeery?" said Naomi. "Ghosts could be *good* es well es bad."

Then vague reflections of an old saying about a guilty conscience making cowards of us all floated through her blurred memory, and she the second time looked curiously out under her eyelids at her old husband.

She never remembered hearing him talk in that way before; an unaccountable uneasiness took possession of her, and as she dropped on her knees beside the bed to say her evening prayer, her first whispered words were:

"Lord suffer not my Ephraim to run fur in the way o' transgressors."

This was as far as her faith could go. That Ephraim would ever reach a state of Christian perfection was beyond her conception, but she had strong hope that in answer to prayer there might be a limit to his shortcomings.

Winter succeeded Indian-summer, and the insect world and all plant life around the farm retired to unseen chambers to await the resurrection voice of spring. Ephraim's better self seemed to have retired too, for he was no longer bothered by its protests; what would

cause its resurrection the future alone must disclose.

He not only kept the ten dollars from the church, but he grew penurious in every way. Naomi noticed it, the hired boy noticed it, and even the cattle, who were fed on straw all the winter so he could sell the hay, felt it sorely.

He stayed away from every public gathering where he thought a subscription or special collection might possibly be asked for.

Lightning-rod vendors, sewing-machine agents, and insurance men, who always had liked to arrive at the hospitable farmhouse near meal time, Ephraim no longer invited to "remain over," and tramps asking for food were sent away hungry whenever he could succeed in doing so before Naomi's eye alighted upon them.

"Ephraim, how kin ye?" she said one time she caught him in the act of turning away a dilapidated specimen of manhood. "Is the milk o' human kindness clean froze up in your buzzom?—refusin' a poor fellow-traveler to the grave a bite to eat."

Muttering something about "the cost of feedin' the hull country," Ephraim shuffled off to the barn, and the tramp went in with Naomi to a warm breakfast.

Ephraim not only became penurious, but grew quarrelsome as well; he blamed everyone except himself for all the accidents that befel him.

The thunderstorms which had come into his life seemed literally to have soured all the milk of human kindness which had formerly overflowed from his heart. He snapped more crossly at Naomi than he had ever done before in all the forty years of their lives together; and the youthful indiscretions of the hired boy had grown to appear such gigantic evils that he fumed at the lad continually.

Joe Cumstock especially seemed an offense to his eyes. The back end of Ephraim's land joined the Cumstock farm, and Ephraim remembered hearing his father say many a time that Joe Cumstock's father, "bein' a graspin' man," had built his fence "two fut" farther in than he had a right to build it on the Hart farm. Indeed the fence had been pointed out as a standing illustration of what a penurious soul will do, and the story of it had been a staple joke in the Hart family for years, retold with many laughable embellishments every time visitors sat around the family board. Ephraim thought more about those two feet of land since the horse trade than he had in all

the rest of his life before, and the more he thought of it the more angry he became.

"That Joe Cumstock is goin' to give me back that two fut o' land of mine he's got off the back lot," he burst out to Naomi one night they were lingering around the tea table after finishing the meal.

It took Naomi some seconds to realize what he meant; she never heard that "two fut o' land," as we said before, mentioned except as a subject for a joke, and looking hurriedly up at him through her spectacles she said :

"Why, Ephraim, let bygones be bygones. Yer father never bothered 'bout that two fut o' land ; ye needn't."

"Joe Cumstock ain't goin' to keep none o' my land," said Ephraim, striking his clenched fist on the table with such force that the cat ran under the stove.

"Tut ! tut ! " said Naomi, looking almost disturbed ; "don't go to extremes, Ephraim."

"Extremes or no extremes, he'll give up that two fut o' land," returned the excited Ephraim.

Without answering him Naomi rose from the table, tied on a blue and white checked gingham apron and proceeded to gather up the tea dishes.

Early the next morning, when there were

but faint streaks of light as harbingers of dawn in the eastern sky, and none of the neighbors had yet thought of stirring, Ephraim might have been seen stepping his back lot, counting three feet to each step. When he had finished his own land, he glanced towards Joe Cumstock's house, and seeing no one astir there, he climbed the rail fence dividing their farms, and proceeded stepping Joe Cumstock's land.

"Aha!" he said triumphantly when he had crossed the lot in yard-length strides, "he's got it all right—the two extry fut. He's got it, an' he hain't got it, fer now he's goin' to be made give it up."

Not satisfied with this he went out another time, one night at ten o'clock, when all the quiet farm neighborhood was fast locked in the arms of Morpheus, and by the light of the full moon, carefully stepped each lot again. He counted aloud to each stride.

"Three—six—nine—twelve—fifteen—eighteen," and so on.

Each time that Ephraim was thus employed Naomi was sleeping the sleep of the just and the generous, completely unconscious of her husband's conduct. Indeed he was careful to see that she was asleep before he attempted to leave the house.

A few days after his last effort at stepping the field, Ephraim had a civil engineer employed resurveying his whole farm to prove that it lacked the "two fut o' land."

Then, not to be "outdone," Joe Cumstock employed another engineer to survey *his* farm.

Each man was anxious to please his employer, consequently they disputed over the question, and a third engineer had to be called in to settle it. So the surveying scheme cost the farmers twenty-five dollars each.

The third engineer decided in favor of Ephraim, but Joe was stubborn, and refused to be convinced, even when Ephraim threatened to "take the law un him."

Itwas not indeed until Joe received a lawyer's letter, which cost Ephraim five dollars, demanding a restitution of the two feet of land, that the fence was moved, and Ephraim became possessor of a border of coarse grass and weeds which had outlined Joe's lot, and had all through the many years lain outside the pale of any cultivation.

EPHRAIM MAKES PROPITIATION.

T was in February that Ephraim's calamities began. Going out one cold morning he found his best young heifer dead. She had been caught in a corner and not being very strong, in consequence of low feeding, she was hooked to death by some of the other cattle. He felt so disturbed over this that, although Naomi repeated to him her scrap of wisdom, "There's no use'n cryin' over spilt milk," he could eat no breakfast.

A few weeks later some smoker who had been around his barnyard late in the evening carelessly dropped a spark from his pipe, and during the night the sheephouse was burned and the entire flock lost.

This happened Saturday night, and Ephraim refused to go to church Sunday, so Naomi had

to get the hired boy to harness Pompey for her and go off alone to the place of worship.

Poor Naomi was sadly puzzled by Ephraim's conduct under these "chastenin's" and felt that there was more necessity than ever that she should attend strictly to duty.

Ephraim sulked all day Sunday, never looked at his Bible or church paper, and, much to Naomi's distress, read a wordly daily paper which had come around a parcel from the village.

As spring was approaching some mysterious disease entered Ephraim's hog pen, and one after another of the hogs succumbed to it until there were none left. . . . Still Ephraim was obdurate; he came near being profane this time.

The inner world in his bosom had entirely changed the outer world for him; the beauties of expanding spring did not touch his soul as on former occasions; the songs of the returning birds annoyed him.

When he was coming home from burying his last hog, a yellow canary perched on a swaying branch was filling the air with rapturous song. Looking at the bird he scowled and said—

"What's that tormented bird makin' sech a noise fer?"

Ephraim Makes Propitiation.

It was coming near ploughing time when the horses took the distemper, which was abroad in the land. It was nothing but what Ephraim could expect, and he did not feel alarmed, but doctored his faithful servants as the other farmers had doctored theirs.

Last of all, Pompey fell prey to the disease. Ephraim applied the usual remedies, but rising early one morning, through an unaccountable uneasiness, he went to the stable and found Pompey prostrate on the floor, apparently in a dying condition.

Pompey, the pride of his eyes and the joy of his heart, for since he had cost Ephraim so much trouble he had become doubly dear to him!

Ephraim fell on his knees and put his ear to Pompey's heart; it was still beating. Then raising his head he looked into the horse's eyes long and earnestly, stroked back the mane from his forehead, and said pleadingly, "Pompey, darlint, ye ain't a-goin' to die?"

There was no one at that early hour to see or hear, so Ephraim lavished loving epithets on his dying horse, and rubbed with his coat sleeve two big tears that refused to stay in their lachrymal fountain.

"Pompey," he said when he could command

his voice, "is it my sin that is killin' ye? Air ye bein' took away from sech a unworthy master?"

He was still kneeling there stroking Pompey's face when the hired boy came out.

"Hedn't I better run to the village for the horse doctor?" he asked in a frightened voice; for Pompey was a favorite of the boy's too, and many a prank they had played together during the winter, when the latter was leading him out to the drinking-place.

This had not occurred to Ephraim before, and he welcomed the idea with alacrity.

But instead of sending the boy he decided to go himself; he would go faster and get the horse doctor started back sooner.

It was not yet good daylight, but with the assistance of the boy he harnessed a plow horse, hitched it to a light wagon and started for the village, without even entering the house to tell Naomi or to eat a bite of breakfast.

The horse doctor was a farmer himself in a small way, living on a few acres of land adjoining the village. All his knowledge of horses and their diseases he had gained in a practical way; indeed he openly scorned degrees conferred by the schools, and frankly admitted that all he knew about farriery was

acquired traveling the country for miles around doctoring the farmers' sick horses.

"I'd give more fer a man es hes cured one sick nag o' spavin or glanders than fer a hundred o' these here chaps with their diplomys from college," he was heard to say more than once.

His skill in his assumed profession was something remarkable, especially in his power of diagnosing a case, or, as his patrons said, "bein' able to tell what was the matter with a beast the moment he sot eyes on it."

When Ephraim arrived at his house he was just coming down-stairs, rubbing his eyes, to start the kitchen fire. He was a tall thin man with a large penetrating nose, a sandy whisker, which protruded from the point of his chin at almost a right angle; he walked with long rapid strides, and his one pleasure in life was a fast horse. His love for horses directed his attention to their ills, and his success in curing these ills won for him the confidence of the farmers and the title of "horse doctor."

"Man, git yer med'cines an' come out at onct to my place, my horse Pompey's dyin'," said Ephraim with a choke in his voice, grasping the man skilled in horse ailments by the arm.

"No, ye kin't wait for breakfast," he added as he saw the horse doctor glance toward the kitchen stove. "Naomy'll give ye a bite out there, when ye have doctored Pompey. Come on."

Seeing the urgency of the case, the horse doctor turned up the collar of his coat, for warmth or to hide his collarless neck, pulled a soft felt hat, which would not fly off when he drove at a furious pace, down on his head, grasped his bag of medicine, and went out with Ephraim.

"That club-foot o' yourn will be all day gittin' me there," he said as soon as he saw Ephraim's stolid steed. "I will harness up my own nag."

This he accordingly did, and started off at a 2.40 gait, feeling that the one compensation for going without his breakfast was having a "spin" on the country road with his famous trotter.

Ephraim followed, but could not keep the horse doctor in sight; the old plow horse was entirely unused to the pace he had taken on the way out to the village, and could not be persuaded into much beyond a walk on the road home.

This, however, did not annoy Ephraim as long

as the horse doctor was ahead of him, and would soon be exercising his skill on Pompey. Now he had time for reflection, and he reflected aloud, as was his custom.

He was just entering "echo hollow" as he was saying "I am a unjust steward," "unjust steward," reaffirmed the echo.

"The very elements knows it," he said sadly under his breath.

"I hev wasted my Lord's money," he continued in a louder tone, "or kep' it, which was just as bad."

"As bad," said the relentless bush voice.

"Yes, as bad," returned Ephraim. "I hev spent my substance on riotous livin'; I'm the prodigal son."

"Prodigal son," said the voice.

This was too much for Ephraim's overwrought nerves, the tears welled into his eyes, and he said in a broken voice, "Ye needn't be throwin' it in my teeth, I feel bad enough." Then he gave a touch of his whip to the plow horse to get him out of that dreadful hollow.

When he reached home he found the horse doctor standing over the still prostrate Pompey chewing a straw and looking "terrible puzzled." This struck a chill to Ephraim's

heart. He turned and walked at once to the house.

Naomi had a plate of ham and eggs fried for his breakfast, and seeing him coming she carried it from the stove to the table; but Ephraim without a word passed by the tempting breakfast and went directly up-stairs to their room.

Laying his hat on a chair, he threw himself on his knees by the bed.

Naomi, much concerned, softly followed her husband up-stairs. Finding the door shut she paused a moment, then noiselessly turning the knob she opened it a couple of inches and anxiously looked in.

Through this small aperture she saw Ephraim on his knees rocking his body back and forth, apparently in great mental agony, and uttering something which at first was unintelligible.

When she had listened some seconds she discerned the words:

"Give me back Pompey, and I'll restore unto thee tenfold."

Her heart lost a beat. "Restore!" Ephraim's words were fraught with hidden meaning.

Then feeling that there may be experience in a man's life into which even the wife of his bosom has no right to intrude, Naomi, all in a

tremor, softly closed the door and tip-toed down-stairs.

She saw, as if by a flashlight, the reason of all the past in Ephraim's conduct. She remembered his irritability when she spoke to him about paying the church money. She understood it all now—he had never paid it. With a woman's quickness of wit she connected it with the horse trade and the loss of the ten dollars thereby. But the only words her lips emitted were:

"Dear! dear!"

However, notwithstanding the revelation which had come to her, she felt as though a great weight were rolled off her heart. It had been very heavy through the fear of losing Pompey, for she too loved the "colt"; but the great burden, which seemed at times too heavy to be borne, was the knowledge of Ephraim's lapsed spiritual condition. Now she felt relieved from both of these distresses.

No one had ever disturbed Naomi's faith by dissertations on the inflexibility of nature's laws and the impossibility of changing them; therefore she felt certain that after Ephraim's repentance and prayer Pompey would be restored to them. The children of Israel were punished when they sinned, but on repentance

all their good things were restored, why should it not be so with this child of Abraham.

As for Ephraim's own condition, Naomi whispered to herself with much inward comfort:

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

Her step as well as her heart was lighter as she carried the ham and eggs back to the oven to keep them warm until such time as Ephraim felt inclined to partake of them.

In half an hour Ephraim came down-stairs and ate scantily of the breakfast. But nothing could induce him to go to the stable; he sat in the kitchen presumably reading the *Weekly Telegraph*, but sometimes he was holding it upside down.

In the meantime, as the horse doctor would not leave Pompey's side, Naomi had sent him out a steaming pot of coffee and some hot buttered buns.

After an hour had elapsed the hired boy came in to say that Pompey had opened his eyes.

The horse doctor kept administering restoratives, and in another hour the boy came in with the intelligence that Pompey could raise his head.

Then Ephraim got courage to go out again. The horse doctor had not gotten his reputation for nothing; he stayed at Ephraim's request the entire day, and by night he had Pompey apparently almost well.

The following week the trustees of the Mapleton Church were asking for a subscription to make some very necessary repairs in the sacred edifice, and Ephraim surprised every one present except Naomi by giving one hundred dollars.

He looked so happy over it that a sister in the church, when meeting was over, went across from another aisle to shake hands with him and say:

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver, Brother Hart."

That evening when Ephraim and Naomi were sitting in the twilight in their cozy kitchen, Ephraim got courage to tell Naomi, what he thought was a secret, about the ten dollars, and his attempt to save it out of the church.

He went into detail and did not spare himself.

Naomi listened from the beginning to the end of the story without saying a word. Even after he had concluded she said nothing. She

had never heard, much less entertained, any doubts as to the existence of a personal devil, such a thought would be to her just as sacrilegious as doubting the existence of a God; and after a silence of fully five minutes she said.

"Dear, dear, Ephraim, ye've had a terrible encounter with the man o' sin."

"I wisht now Joe hed that two fut o' land back again," said Ephraim; "he'd feel better, an' so would I. He'll hev a gredge agin me now all the rest o' my mortal days, an' the land aint no good—I guess that's the way our sins do foller us," he added with a sigh.

To change the subject, and "cheer Ephraim, up a bit," Naomi arose, lighted a candle, and brought him the *Weekly Telegraph.*

About three months afterwards, Ephraim, one day in a burst of confidence, told Peter McKim, the village theologian, the whole story of his bitter experience, and its outcome.

"Tut! tut! Ephraim," exclaimed Peter in anything but a sympathetic voice (he was the "nearest" man in the village, and also loved to be in the opposition) "no sacrifice is necessary to propitiate the Almighty, they're sayin' now, (the young minister hes got it), to turn away His wrath, or win His favor. He demands

righteousness of his people an' *nothin'* more—accordin' to the new theology."

"I don't care," returned Ephraim stubbornly, theology or no theology, I ain't sorry I give that hundred; "I've prospered ever sence."

THE VILLAGE SAINT.

THE VILLAGE SAINT.

E made a picture which would have rejoiced the soul of an artist, could he have seen him as he sat in his loose canvas smock, on his low, leather-covered bench, mending shoes for the whole village. Shoes of all sizes and shapes, from the cow-hide brogans of Jake Bender, in which he had walked over every foot of his hundred-acre farm, to Mrs. McGibbon's delicate kids, the soles of which she had danced off at the last "hop," and from the square toes of McClosky's boy, who kicked out a pair a month, and spread them over a second month by having them half-soled—to the pretty little patent leathers of Rose Murray, which the child herself loved to carry to the old cobbler.

His head, with its silky crown of long, white hair, was almost constantly bowed over his

work, and one did not often get a glimpse into the windows of his soul. But there was a sheen on the bending face which always attracted a second glance from a stranger, as if the effulgence within imparted a transparency to the material covering. One could imagine that while his eyes were fastened on his humble work, above the tap, tap, tap of his shoemaker's hammer, he, like St. Cecilia, heard some strain celestial, which lifted his soul beyond the earth and its cares and interests.

Men and women seemed to trust him without a question, and children and dogs went into his presence as if they were friends of long standing.

His workroom was small and dingy-looking to the ordinary observer. The delicate tracery which festooned the high, narrow windows, was nothing but "nasty cobwebs" to the thrifty housewife, though no Gobelin tapestries could be objects of greater interest to the owner than these webs were to the old shoemaker. Each spider was classified, and looked on as one of God's wonderful creatures, and the daily progress of his marvelous spinning and weaving watched with sympathic care.

Over the east window, the window through which the sun first sent his vivifying glance

hung a text—"The Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings"—wrought in blue worsted, which the brush of time had toned down to a softened gray, in a frame made of pumpkin-seeds, all the handiwork of an only daughter many years in the grave. No world's masterpiece compared in value with this crude work of art in the old man's estimation.

The walls all around his bench, which was placed in a corner, were lined with funeral cards of many years' accumulation. To me they seemed at first a gruesome sight, but one day, when he saw me looking at them, and possibly read my thoughts in my too expressive countenance, he waved his hand around the two sides of the funereally-decorated wall and said, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." After that the row of funeral cards had another meaning for me.

Somehow, every time I looked at the old man sitting on his humble bench, I thought of St. John's vision of the church, "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." And I wondered now whether he could have found a better pulpit from which to preach the gospel than his shoemaker's bench, or a more important field than

the one presented to him every day in the people who came to have their shoes repaired.

He never obtruded on others what was uppermost in his mind, he never lectured or preached at the bad boys, never told Jerry McClosky he should not get drunk, nor Mrs. McGibbon she should not dance, but in his presence all vain prattle and malicious gossip ceased, and looking at his face other faces grew serious and wistful. We expected saintliness from our ministers, and considering it part of their nature and altogether their business, it did not make much impression on us. But into our workaday village life the old shoemaker brought another world atmosphere, which had its influence upon us all.

The only variation in the routine of his week's work was the church prayer-meeting, which he never failed to attend. His prayer was the wonder of the village, and many of the city people who visited us during the summer time attended the little meeting just to hear our old shoemaker pray.

I cannot say that "fools who came to mock remained to pray," but those who went to the meeting prompted by curiosity alone, brought away with them a conception of divine Fatherhood they never had before. And a "higher

critic" was once heard to say that that old man's prayer would do more to establish faith than the disquisitions of a hundred theologians.

The old shoemaker was uneducated—if making mistakes of grammar and mispronouncing words can be called uneducated—on other occasions—but this wonderful prayer was a perfect piece of English, as if he got it direct from the fountain of all knowledge.

As he advanced in years, when other men grew heavy and dull in sensibilities, he seemed to grow more sympathetic, more spiritual, more ethereal.

One morning, when everything was exhaling the fragrance of spring, the tulips and daffodils and narcissus were nodding from garden plots; the maples were crowned with tenderest green; and the blue-bird, and robin and oriole were filling the air with Eden's own music, I drew near the old shoemaker's shop and heard him singing. I had never heard him sing before, but now out through the open window—the one through which the rising sun could be seen—there floated in low, quavering tones—

"On the other side of Jordan,
In the green fields of Eden,
Where the tree of life is blooming,
There is rest for me."

He had just concluded when I stepped in, and he looked up with a little abashed smile, as if to apologize for the unwonted noise, and said, "My mother often rocked me to sleep on that hymn; somehow I have been thinking of her all morning." After this explanation he stitched awhile in silence on Rose Murray's little patent leather shoe, and we heard in the distance the irresponsible whistle of McClosky's boy.

When I had concluded my business, I tried to entice the old shoemaker out for a refreshing walk in the spring sunshine. But in answer to my invitation, he smiled and said, with a note of tenderness in his voice, "What would the little daughter do for her booties? She's coming for them in an hour."

At the appointed time little Rose Murray called to find the old saint sitting on his bench, with his needle and wax-end poised in his uplifted hand, and something in his face which strangely moved her. Creeping up to him, she climbed on his bench beside him, and put her chubby arms around his neck. A few seconds later Mrs. McGibbon opened the door and found them there—the old man gazing wistfully, yet with a strange, unearthly, illuminating joy on his face, out through the east window

up into the heavens, and the child, with her arms around his neck, and a gleam of sunshine tangled in her yellow hair, kissing his withered cheek.

Mrs. McGibbon had never seen a Murillo or a Raphael, and she was not a woman given to imagination, but she stopped suddenly, and grasped the knob of the door more tightly, while some chord within her vibrated which had never been touched before.

The old man spoke but once, and leaning forward she heard the words, which seemed to echo faint and sweet from the other shore—

> "On the other side of Jordan,
> In the sweet fields of Eden,
> Where the tree of life is blooming,
> There is rest for me."

KIRSTY McALLISTER.

KIRSTY McALLISTER.

LOVE SUFFERETH LONG.

EARLY in life did the burdens of care and responsibility begin to bear heavily upon Kirsty McAlister, the eldest child and only daughter of Duncan McAlister, a stern, silent Scotchman, who wrung a hard-earned livelihood from a frontier farm in Ontario. Some years after her advent three baby brothers had followed in quick succession, and she naturally became their nurse, for the all-too-busy mother had scant time to spare, and when little more than a baby herself Kirsty might have been found at almost any hour of the day tugging a fat baby about the farmyard, her small shoulders bent, and her slight arms clasping tightly the pudgy form, while a look of motherly solicitude showed in her wide gray eyes.

The neighbors were disposed to think it was hardly fair, and to sympathize with "the poor little thing" for the hard times she had, but Kirsty rebelled not in her heart.

She loved the three boys with a love bordering on idolatry. Every cent of the money that came to her so sparingly was saved up to buy candy or tops or balls for them: every tasty bit that fell to her share at the table was transferred to their plates.

Duncan McAlister had not much education himself, but he had made up his mind to give his sons a "good schoolin'." They would perpetuate his name. Perhaps one of them might get to be a member of Parliament,—the highest dignity Duncan could imagine—and "schoolin'" was a long step in that direction.

As for Kirsty, it never occurred to him to think about her future—girls were always provided for somehow.

She went to the public school until the neighbors began to remark when they met her, "Why, Kirsty, ye're gettin' to be a big girl, now." Then it was thought time for her to stay at home and help her mother.

When the boys were old enough they were sent to an Academy at the lower end of the county, returning home every Friday night for

Kirsty to wash and iron for them—of necessity their wardrobe was scanty—and get them ready for a fresh start Monday morning.

With what care and pride did she gloss their white linen collars that they might look as well as "ony o' thae toon chaps."

After spending some years in the Academy, the two younger ones passed the matriculation examination, and entered the University; while Kirsty at home, with hands made brown and stubby by hard work, churned, and baked, and scrubbed, and carried butter and eggs to the village, with the sole desire of helping the boys complete their education.

When they first went to Toronto they wrote to Kirsty quite often. City life was new and strange; nobody seemed to be much interested in them; in fact, they were scarcely noticed; and to keep themselves in countenance at all, they felt the need of Kirsty's prompt replies to their school-boy effusions, telling them about the farm, the stock, and everyday doings in the house, but more than all, telling them how much she missed them.

Moreover, in time, when they felt more at home, they wanted so many little extras—"keys" to their classics, new neckties, money to pay for their photographs, occasional

"treats" in their room, and Kirsty proved a veritable magician, it seemed to the boys, in providing the required funds.

Large parcels of shirts and collars came home at stated intervals to be laundried by her, as it was cheaper to send them than to have the work done in the city.

The boys' photographs taken in their University caps and gowns were the principal ornaments of the "room"—as the small apartment kept for the reception of company was called—in the farmhouse: and were proudly exhibited to all the neighbors who dropped in.

Kirsty often stole away from the heat and work and worry of the kitchen into the coolness of this sacred room, and stood for a few moments in front of those capped and gowned forms, like a devotee before a shrine, returning to her unceasing round of toil, satisfied and happy in the thought that it was all for those wonderful boys.

With the passing of the months they wrote home more and more rarely, but Kirsty was ready with excuses for them—they were so busy with their studies—they had made so many friends—and so on, and in no wise did her loving concern for them abate.

Thus did the years slip by, she toiling and

moiling with tireless energy, and starving her own life in many ways so that her student brothers might lack for nothing necessary.

Although grown to full womanhood she had never been in the city—in fact, never beyond the village where she disposed of her butter and eggs and made the few purchases that she permitted herself.

But her opportunity came the year the boys graduated, and in a curious fashion.

By the time their finals were passed the students found themselves completely out of money, and as they could not get their degrees without paying the fees therefor they were in a serious quandary. An urgent letter explaining the situation was accordingly despatched, but, as it happened, no one went to the village from the McAlister farm for several days, and consequently Kirsty did not receive the letter until the day before Convocation.

Great was the perturbation in the McAlister household at this unlooked for emergency. Without loss of time the required amount was made up, the larger portion of it, as usual, coming from the little store patiently accumulated by Kirsty from the sale of her butter and eggs. But then arose the question—how was it to be got to the boys in time? There was

no mail that day from the little village, and to wait another day would make it too late.

"Let Kirsty tak it hersel," said the mother in a sudden fit of inspiration, not for an instant considering whether such an expedition would give the girl pain or pleasure, but thinking only of the necessity of her sons in comparison with whom poor Kirsty was of such little account.

At first the idea set Kirsty all of a tremble, but her heroic nature soon rose above her fears, and she responded bravely enough :

"I'll tak it mither, if ye say so."

Thus it came about that Kirsty was at last to have an opportunity of seeing the provincial capital.

She set out with a heart strangely divided betwixt joy and fear, for she rejoiced at the prospects of meeting her idolized brothers, yet felt full of feminine apprehensions with regard to entering alone into the great city which the boys in their early letters described as such a terribly wicked place.

As she ventured forth from the railway depot in quest of her brothers' quarters, she had to ask for guidance at almost every crossing, so bewildering did she find her novel surroundings.

She wore a gown which she had made herself

and her hat was of her own trimming, and both were sadly out of fashion. But Kirsty was supremely unconscious of their defects, her fresh young face, glowing partly with excitement and partly with the anticipation of meeting her brothers, made more than one observer glance at her a second time.

At length she reached the boarding-house she sought, and was so glad to learn that her brothers were in their rooms as to be quite oblivious of the sharp contemptuous look cast upon her by the pert servant who answered her third timid ring.

Hastening up the stairs with throbbing heart she found the door of the room open, and the two students puffing hard at their pipes while they puzzled their brains with vain conjectures as to how they should manage in the absence of the wherewithal to pay the unavoidable fees.

Overcome by nervousness Kirsty stood in the doorway silent until one of her brothers, looking up, saw her, and exclaimed:

"Je-rusalem, Kirsty! What under the sun brought you here?"

Poor Kirsty! bitter, bitter was her disappointment, for, although when the first shock of surprise was over, and the anxiously awaited

money duly delivered, her brothers did endeavor to pretend some pleasure at her appearance, her woman's subtle instinct penetrated the thin pretence, and her loving heart felt sorely bruised by the lack of genuine warmth in their manner.

In the afternoon the boys took Kirsty to the Convocation, choosing the back streets to reach the hall, and entering by a side door which would permit of her being hidden away in a remote corner of the great chamber, where they left her alone while they joined their classmates.

But this did not trouble Kirsty. She was too absorbed in admiration of her brothers to take thought for herself. She noted with pride how they threw back their shoulders and turned out their toes, and walked "very grand" as she afterwards told her mother. In her eyes they were beyond cavil the finest looking young fellows in the great city.

Yet she could not help feeling hurt when after all the impressive exercises of the eventful day were over her brothers left her to find her own way back to the boarding-house on the plea that they had to be "with the fellows."

Not only so but they must continue to be "with the fellows" all the evening likewise,

while she sat alone and lonely in their room, darning their socks and sewing on buttons by way of occupation.

While she worked she recalled the events of the afternoon, and lingered proudly over the scene where her brothers marched up the isle wearing the gowns she had helped to pay for. How they had knelt before the Chancellor to get their degree, while the other students applauded and shouted their names. O, the rapture of that moment! She had heard with her own ears the name of McAlister ring through the great hall of the University. Once she laid down her needle with a button she had in her fingers, and picking up a pencil wrote their names: "Thomas McAlister, B.A." "William John McAlister, B. A." Then she began to wonder what kind of frames would look well around their parchments. She believed she had enough egg-money left to frame them—they must hang over their photographs as an additional ornament to the "room."

The boys accompanied her home and remained two weeks.

Throughout their entire course Kirsty had looked forward to this home-coming, when she would have them to herself again as in the old times, free from books and lectures and laden

with honors. How proudly she would walk with them to church, while the neighbors would look on admiringly, nudging each other as they whispered:

"Yon fine lookin' fellows, who walk so straight, are Kirsty McAlister's brothers—graduated at Toronto University."

For several weeks she had been preparing their room, and had lain awake nearly all one night trying to decide whether their carpet should be "hit an' miss" or "black and yellow stripe." But the boys never noticed the bright rag carpet on their previously uncarpeted room, nor the muslin curtains purchased with many a heavy basket of eggs which she had carried to the village.

If she ventured to express an opinion when they were talking, they looked at her in surprise as if she had said something ridiculous. They criticised mercilessly her Scotch accent and mannerisms, and wondered what in the world she had been doing to make her hands so like a washer-woman's. On the Sunday they each took a book and a pipe and went off to "the bush," leaving her to walk to church alone instead of being escorted by her two distinguished brothers as she had so fondly hoped.

She swallowed hard to keep back the tears

as she walked slowly to the cross-roads church, and again as she sat alone in the uncomfortable pew, and there came up in her memory the days when two little chaps who called her sister were proud to walk beside her, and to snuggle up close during the long wearisome service, if indeed a sleepy head did not lie heavy upon either knee ere the sermon was half finished.

Pained and puzzled she asked herself why her brothers, had changed in their feeling towards her? Did the fault lie with her? What had she done or left undone that justified their conduct?

The days that followed brought no balm to her sore heart, nor light to her bewildered brain. She never thought of putting the blame upon her brothers. The fault, whatever it was, must be her own, and silently she set herself to bear this new burden.

Thus it came about that, although she would have been reluctant to confess it, she nevertheless felt in a certain way relieved when the brothers returned to the city to enter upon their professional studies.

SEEKETH NOT HER OWN.

URING the last two years the boys were in college young Colin McEwen, a neighbor's son, with a house, farm and stock of his own had been "keepin' company" with Kirsty, and trying to persuade her to leave the old home, and become mistress of his. Kirsty however put him off—how could she leave before the boys got through college?

She knew that without her help, and the money she gave them, they would have a hard time getting along; if indeed they would not be compelled to interrupt their studies in order to earn the money necessary to carry them through. Consequently, although Colin argued and pleaded, and even threatened, Kirsty remained firm. She would not desert the boys until they needed her no longer.

Shortly after the boys' graduation, when Kirsty was at last beginning to think it possible she might soon be at the head of a house of her own, and to that end was patching her quilts, plucking the geese for the completion of her feather bed, and laying by the last lot of eggs to get her set of dishes, her mother suddenly died, the whole care of the family thereby falling upon the girl's young shoulders.

The eldest boy had come home from the Academy to the farm, "he didna tak to buiks," so he and the father needed to be looked after. The younger boys were pursuing their professional duties in the city, and required a good many little helps from home, too. Colin chafed at this delay, and began in a few months to urge his claim again. Kirsty's heart strongly pleaded for him, but now she had her father and brother to care for. Colin suggested a hired girl, but Kirsty knew her father would never be willing to pay wages to a girl; and if he were, could she leave her men-folk to a stranger?—she might burn their porridge, or scorch their white Sunday shirts in the ironing. After much arguing Colin grew first sullen, then angry, then sold his farm and rushed off to Australia.

As he bade Kirsty good-by at the corner

of the house, with the cold unfeeling moon looking down upon them, he said bitterly, as he wrung her hand in parting:

"It's no' much for me ye'r carin', Kirsty, when ye'r prefairin' faither an' brither to me, an' lettin' me go."

The memory of that night was ever keen with Kirsty, and she could not see the full moon without having brought back to her in painful vividness Colin's haggard face and pleading eyes.

Life seemed very gray with Colin gone out of it, but Kirsty never faltered in the fulfilment of her duty toward her father and brothers.

"An' her men-folk havena to gi' her a copper," said a neighbor in recounting Kirsty's virtues, "for she dresses hersel', gi'es her Sawbath collection, an' her annual fee to the mission fund out o' the proceeds o' the butter an' eggs she carries every week to the market."

She furnished and decorated the old farmhouse, and made it as delightful a spot for the two dependent upon her for home comforts as the scanty means at her command would allow. She plucked more geese and made more feather beds and pillows. She patched quilts, in every conceivable pattern, for every bed in

"A 'far away look' in her gray eyes."—*Page 243.*

the house, and made rag-carpets until the next door neighbor said, "Ye'd tak' it for a toon hoose wi' all it's carpets an' fixin's." Yet she never disturbed her own little "settin' oot," for although no letters passed between Colin and her the hope of seeing him again was strong in her heart.

Twice a year, with a look peculiar to the occasion, "a far-away look" in her gray eyes, she overhauled the big pine box containing her own precious feather-bed, quilts, and woollen blankets, spun by her own hands, and sprinkled fresh black pepper among them. When that was done she wiped the dust tenderly off her set of white stone china with the gilt band, which was in another box.

This labor of love always made her tired, what city ladies would call "faint," strong as she was; and for change and rest she would tie on her sun-bonnet and go out to weed among her Sweet Williams and hollyhocks, or pick a bunch of rosemary or southernwood to put in the drawers. The very scent of the rosemary brought back a world of memories —Colin used to wear it in his buttonhole.

In the course of a few years Duncan McAlister died, and when his will was read it was found that all his property was left to his

sons. The eldest got the farm. It was not worth while dividing the little money left among three, and as it would help the two boys away from home in their professions it was divided between them. Kirsty did not need money.

The next year the brother on the farm married, and very soon after Kirsty was fully convinced that the old farmstead could be her home no longer.

She never heard from her brothers in the city now.—They were too deeply engrossed in their own professional and domestic concerns.

It was at the cost of many secretly shed tears that she decided to leave the dear old home with its tender associations and its homely everyday appointments which she had known and loved from babyhood. The very paper on every wall—a luxury in which she had indulged herself during the last year—she had chosen and hung all by herself, and the rag-carpets that covered every floor were cut, and sewed, if not woven by her own hands. Now she must go out forever, and leave it all to the care of another—a mere stranger so far as she was concerned.

The evening before she left she lingered a full hour in the garden among her posies.

The roses and the creepers—she remembered she had made a wreath for her mother's coffin of them. The Sweet William and the southernwood—a bunch of the latter she had carried to the boys on their graduation day; the nodding orange lilies—she had decorated their hats on many a Twelfth of July when they were little fellows; the marigold bed with its variety of golden beauties—she had taken the first prize at the county fair the year before for the best collection of marigolds; the hedge of great "open-countenanced hollyhocks," under whose broad leaves she was sheltering from the rays of the setting sun, seemed to be offering her silent sympathy as she stood among them.

To Kirsty her flowers were sentient things, capable of suffering. She would as soon have thought of injuring a creature of flesh and blood as of bruising any one of them; over them she shed copious tears. The rosemary she put in a pot, and carried away under her shawl.

She came into the village to learn dressmaking, and it was there I saw her for the first time. The early part of her life-story I heard from Mrs. McTavish, who before her marriage had been an old neighbor of Kirsty's in the country.

Her hands were so stiff with hard work that it took her twice as long as others to become mistress of needlecraft.

"Not but what Kirsty ha' done lots o' sewin' in her life, th' carpets an' th' beddin' in th' old farm house will tell ye that tale," said Mrs. McTavish, "not to speak o' the men's shirts an' keep in general; but that is a very different thing from the frills an' pipin's o' thae fashionable bodices."

It was Granny Nielson to whom Mrs. McTavish was talking, and all the old saint said in reply was: "It must need be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

When Kirsty had served her apprenticeship she rented a house—a tiny thing—on the outskirts of the village, and began to make another home for herself. She planted vines around it, and spent the earnings of two hard days on a climbing rose. While she was planting the latter, she wondered if her brother's wife would remember to water the white rosebush she had planted on William John's birthday—she always did it—it was such a tender thing—and a large round tear dropped into the upturned clay.

She was in her house a year, and was begin-

ning to feel more like the old Kirsty again. She had become reconciled to the paper on the walls which would never have been her choosing; and she had braided enough mats for the best room to make it look quite like the old room on the farm.

Spring was drawing near, and the women of the village had begun to accost each other with the question: "Have ye started to house-clean yet?" and Kirsty was feeling a certain amount of pride in having them put this question to her—in being mistress in a house once more, with authority to say when a thing should be done, and when left undone.

She had made up her mind to begin the next morning the great annual dusting and scouring of her Lares and Penates, which the housewife of the American continent considers necessary to cleanliness, when that afternoon intelligence reached her that a typhoid epidemic had carried off her youngest brother and his wife, leaving their two little girls orphaned. The next morning she started on her second trip to Toronto, leaving her front door key with the "Village Helper."

As soon as the latter saw that Kirsty had safely departed, she went to her house, unlocked the front door, and, having entered,

began to pull things about, and did not cease pulling them until she had given the house a thorough going over from the dusting down of the attic cobwebs to the whitewashing of the cellar.

When Kirsty arrived in Toronto she learned that her brother had been living beyond his income, and that his property would not meet the claims against it. There was no one to care for the fatherless, penniless children. The wives of the brothers did not want to be bothered with them, and it was suggested that they be sent to an orphans' home in the city.

"Gi'e them to me," said Kirsty. And as there was no one to object, she gathered them in her arms, and started back to her village home.

"She'll have her hands full wid them two young uns to 'tend an' support," said Mrs. Brady, when the news reached the village of what she was doing. "After the way that boy treated her I wouldn't mind no baby av his," she added with an emphatic nod, and in this opinion she was joined by the majority of the other women.

But when the Village Helper from her back stoop saw her get off the train she threw on her sun-bonnet and took a short cut across to

Kirsty's house, had a fire in the stove, and was making a batch of biscuit by the time the weary traveler arrived, carrying the two-year-old baby in her arms, while the four-year-old clung timidly to her skirt.

"Well, ye're come back," said the Village Helper briskly rubbing the dough from her fingers, not raising her eyes from her work, nor deigning to notice the children. "I reckon ye'll need somethin' to eat. Law, ye'll be sick on my hands next! Sit to, an' I'll give ye a cup o' tea."

Before tea was ready Kirsty discovered what had been done in her home during her absence. But when with brimming eyes she sought to express her thanks, the Village Helper said decisively, as she placed a steaming cup before the tired woman, "I'll leave the house this minute, Kirsty, if ye say another word," and Kirsty was obliged to swallow her gratitude with her refreshing tea.

By one of those strange coincidences which are so bewildering it fell out that the very day after the little girls were brought from Toronto Colin McEwen returned from Australia.

Kirsty was working in the garden, when Mrs. McTavish, who had Highland blood in her veins, and therefore loved everything savoring

of a romance, hastily wiped the warm suds from her hands, for it was her washing day, ran "across lots" and leaning on Kirsty's little front gate—she couldn't take time to go in—called in a sharp whisper to the pale grave woman, several yards away, stooping over her work.

"Kirsty, I've news for ye, Colin McEwen's come home!"

Blushing as red as the peony she was tying to a stake, Kirsty straightened up and looked steadily at Mrs. McTavish.

The latter read the question in her face, and hastened to add:

"I know what I'm talking about, for my man was down to the railway station when the train come in a few minutes ago, an' saw him get off't."

Still Kirsty said nothing, but glanced down at her soiled hands and rumpled apron.

"Go right in an' slick yerself up a bit," continued Mrs. McTavish as she saw Kirsty's nervous glance, "an' I'll go back to my wash-tub. . . . Pit on yer light calico wi' the sprig," she called after she had gone several yards from Kirsty's gate, "ye look a long sight the best in that."

Kirsty went at once to put on the light

calico with the sprig—the gown she was keeping sacred for church—and to sleek her hair. Somehow the blush lingered, and an hour later when Colin arrived a pretty pink still tinged her cheek.

Colin's heart was bursting with indignation and sympathy as he had heard all of Kirsty's story from Mrs. McTavish, who, notwithstanding the waiting washing, had waylaid him as he was on the road to Kirsty's house.

He had quite made up his mind before he saw her to take her back to Australia with him. "Her faither is deid, an' her brither married, so there's nothin' to hinder now," he said to his confidante, Mrs. McTavish. As for her keeping the babies, he scouted the idea. He never liked "thae upstarts o' boys, an' wouldna hae Kirsty trackled the rest o' her life wi' ony o' their bairns." And even Mrs. McTavish, with her woman's heart, felt inclined to think he was right.

When he discussed the question with Kirsty, however, he could not persuade her into seeing it in any other light but that it was her plain duty to keep the children.

They talked from the noon-hour until the sun sank behind the silver poplar at the west end of Kirsty's garden, and the children left

their blocks in the middle of the room to grasp the flickering leaf-shadows cast by the climbing rose on the floor of the small porch. It was a heart-sore time.

"There's no place for them but the orphan asylum if I dinna keep them," said Kirsty with tears in her voice.

Just as she spoke the two babies ceasing their play toddled across the room to where Kirsty sat and, moved by a common impulse of shyness, grasped her skirt in their plump hands while they plunged their rosy faces into the folds. To many a woman this would have meant nothing, for of course the little things could not understand a word of what had been said, but Kirsty's sensitive heart saw in it "a leadin'."

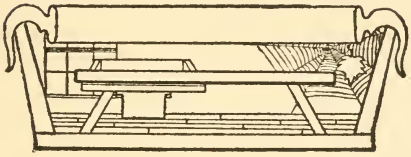
With the children still clinging to her skirt she rose, and with flushed cheeks and breaking heart, extended her hand to her lover, lapsing into her mother tongue as she cried.

"Gang awa to Australy withoot me, Colin. I maun stay by the bairns."

Colin sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing angrily, and his lips working quickly although not a word came from them. For the space of a full minute the two lovers looked into each other's eyes, and then Colin, sore-hearted, but

unyielding, flung himself out of the house, and strode down the village street in the direction of the railway station.

The same night he set out on his return journey to Australia.



NEVER FAILETH.

FTER Colin had gone Kirsty stood where he had left her as if rooted to the floor, following the stalwart figure with wide-open eyes until the two children began to cry and tug at her skirt. Then she turned, snatched them from the floor, and sinking into her rocking-chair clasped them to her heart while a succession of hard dry sobs broke from her.

Two pairs of round blue eyes looked wonderingly into the haggard face, and two pairs of soft little chubby hands reached up to stroke the drawn colorless cheeks. When for response they heard only another choking sob, two little mouths began to droop at the corners, and seriously threatened answering sobs. Then Kirsty stooped, kissed the quivering mouths,

and to quiet the children began brokenly to sing a psalm she had learned from her mother.

"The Lord's my Shepherd . . . . I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green . . . . He leadeth me
The quiet . . . . waters by."

The babies listened to what sounded more like a wail than a psalm of praise until Kirsty had finished the first stanza; but when she started another, the little lower lips protruded ominously again, and to prevent an outburst Kirsty was obliged to change suddenly into a nursery ditty, one with which she had often put her brothers to sleep when they were babies.

Soothed by this and the rocking, the two heads of curling gold nestled down on her bosom and soon fell asleep.

Something in the song, or in the contact of the two warm loving things in her arms, quieted Kirsty's heart, and she crooned on from one old-time tune to another, keeping time with her rocking-chair until twilight deepened into darkness. Then she rose and laid the babies on the bed. As she stood gazing down on the cherub faces of the sleeping children suddenly a great flood of love welled up in her heart, and she fell on her knees by the children's bed, and silently thanked God

for this token of his approval of the course she pursued.

Kirsty had always been very reticent in regard to her religious experience. Indeed she had never spoken in meeting in her life, but that night into her simple life there came a glory whose glow brightened all the remainder of the way.

The villagers for some time after talked much about Kirsty, some praising her action and more blaming her.

"What kin a body say or do fur her," said Mrs. Brady, "when she'll let such a chance as that to get a comfortable support slip through."

Good Mrs. McTavish felt so hurt because all her little schemes had been frustrated that she did not go near Kirsty for weeks. But while the villagers were watching to see her pine away and die of a broken heart, after the manner of people in books, she actually began to grow younger under their very eyes, or what superficial observers would call younger. A certain beauty came into her face which they could explain in no other way.

Some resented it—Colin's friends—and said "She is no much carein' for Colin McEwen after all, or she wouldna be goin' 'round lookin' so chirk."

Others hinted: "She's just puttin' it on; it'll not last long."

"I wouldna be surprised to see her break down any day, and then what will become o' the children?" said Mrs. McTavish.

But Granny Nielson, the oldest communicant in the kirk, said: "There is a look in her een which telt me as soon as I saw her that she endured as seein' Him who is inveesible."

Meanwhile Kirsty became busier each successive day. Prompted either by curiosity or kindness, women who had previously made their own best gowns this year discovered they had too much to do to attempt it. Moreover, the report got around that Kirsty was an "extry good fit."

Strange as it may seem, the passing years, with their many cares and labors, brought no unsightly wrinkles into Kirsty's face, but new lines of beauty seemed continually growing. A calm faith looked steadily out from her deep gray eyes, and fretted hurried spirits, when passing her on the street, were often soothed by merely looking at her.

Her modest home, which was now a bower of beauty with all its vines and roses, inspired by its silent influence the neighbors to make some attempt at "reddin' up" their premises.

It also had become a refuge for the tempted and tried, from Becky Thorn, who had flirted too seriously with the last summer boarder, to the grave minister, pressed down by the heavy burden of his work.

In a few years the two babies grew to be tall school girls, and Kirsty patiently guided and cared for them, encouraging them to take all the education they could get from the village school, and stimulating them to study by telling them what a wonderful scholar their father had been. His degree certificate, which she was carefully keeping for the girls, was one of the principal ornaments of her best room. They never tired hearing of the great doings of that Convocation day and all the little details which Kirsty recounted, not omitting even the bouquet of southernwood which on that occasion she had carried to the boys. The root of the old plant was in her garden now.

It seemed but a step from girlhood to womanhood, when lovers began to sue for the hearts and hands of Kirsty's girls, and she lived her life over again in their precious confidences. In due time a double wedding took place, and the children of her care left her for the second homes which love had prepared for them.

They married two youths in the neighborhood and settled down close by Kirsty, and she was content.

One morning a week after the wedding, Mrs. McTavish's little Aggie came over to Kirsty's on some errand and found her still in bed. This was very unusual, for it had always been Kirsty's custom to rise with the birds; and Aggie did not know what to think of it. When she had delivered her message, Kirsty said to her:

"When ye gang hame, lassie, tell yer mither when she has her work done up I would consider it a great kindness if she would drop in for a bit. . . . Sit down a while an' rest ye, dearie; there is no hurry wi' ye hame." But some look in Kirsty's face made the child leave the house at once and run home as fast as her little feet could carry her.

Mrs. McTavish came immediately with a mug of jam in her hand and a bunch of dried camomile under her arm.

"It's mighty kind in ye to come so soon, Agnes," said Kirsty. "An' I dinna like to be troublin' ye, but I knew I was soon goin' an' I thought ye wouldna mind stayin' wi' me to the end, Agnes, you who ha' been wi' me all thae years."

"Hush, Kirsty," responded Mrs. McTavish. "It's all tired out ye are wi' trachled nerves, an' no wonder. It's a cup o' green tea an' some o' this jam o' my own makin' ye want to fix ye up again."

Then she busied herself about putting on the tea-kettle.

Kirsty shook her head and murmured: "Agnes, I feel ma time is come."

"Toots, Kirsty," retorted Mrs. McTavish in an almost harsh tone, the pain at her heart was so great; "ye're a young woman yet, not much past forty. Colin McEwen'll be comin' back for ye one o' these days."

To this sally Kirsty made no reply, but quietly sipped the tea Mrs. McTavish quickly brought her. Strengthened by this she went on.

"I havna been able to do much in ma life, Agnes—not much—but I'm hopin'—yes, I'm hopin'—the good Lord may say, 'She hath done what she could.'"

"Ye ha' done more than a' the rest o' us pit togither," returned Mrs. McTavish huskily.

"What a mercy o' God," continued Kirsty, as if she did not hear this sincere testimony, "that we havna got to earn heaven, or where would be ma chance, Agnes?"

Mrs. McTavish stooped to the floor to pick up something and to wipe away a tear.

"Found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through faith in Christ," continued Kirsty softly, as though talking to an unseen presence.

"Don't be talkin' so, Kirsty," said Mrs. McTavish; "the tea ha' made ye better a'ready, Ye'll be the spryest o' the lot o' us when Colin comes; an' I ha' a feelin' he'll come for ye soon."

"Tell Colin should he come back, Agnes, that I'll be waitin' for him in that country where there are no misunderstandin's." Mrs. McTavish turned her back suddenly and looked hard out the window.

"Can ye no sing me a bit psalm, Agnes? Ye were always sich a fine singer in the choir. I doot I ha' the voice to help ye much, but somehow ma heart feels like singin', an' all mornin' it's been goin' over the psalm sung last Sabbath in the kirk—'God is our refuge.' Find it, Agnes; it's the forty-sixth," and she passed Mrs. McTavish the psalter, which was on a stand by the bed.

"Ah, Kirsty, I havna been brought up in the kirk all thae years an' needin' a bit buik to sing that," and Mrs. McTavish's rich contralto voice broke into—

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid."

The white face on the pillow shone as though it had been the face of an angel.

"Though hills amidst the sea be cast;
Though waters roaring make,
And troubled be; yea, though the hills
By swelling seas do shake."

"It's a' true, Agnes—speeritually," said Kirsty, "every word true. What I ha' gi'en up for His sake He has made up to me an hundred fold, as He promises. I see now, Agnes, that the only life that is found is the life that is lost. Ma life has been a happy one here, yes, a happy one, but it is only when we awake in His likeness we shall be sateesfied. I shall be sateesfied when I awake in His likeness. Think o' that, Agnes, when ye are lookin' at ma poor worn-out body in its coffin; I shall be sateesfied."

In spite of doctors and nurses, Kirsty passed away that evening with the setting sun. Her earthly work was done and she seemed to know it, and slipped away quietly without having been what could be called ill. The Village

Helper and the neighbors who officiated at the "laying out" arrayed her in softest and finest white—the fashion of dressing the dead in her black silk, or newest and most fashionable gown, had not yet reached the village—and the village children gathered white roses to fill the work-worn hands, Mrs. McTavish twining a large soft petal over the spot on her left fore finger, which had been made brown by the countless needle pricks.

The women, who came in twos and threes to view the remains, as was the custom of the village, said she looked more like a beautiful bride than a lifeless body enshrouded for the tomb.

"If Colin McEwen could only see her now," whispered Mrs. McTavish as she brushed the back of her hand over her eyes.

"Ay, she is seen, an appreciated, an' claimed by a more worthy Bridegroom," said Granny Nielson, who had toddled over with her staff in hand to do honor to the dead although she was bad with the "rheumatics."

"She helpit a' body a'tho she was no reech, an' wi' a' her tribble she was aye cheerful," said another neighbor.

"She was der pest vriend in der world to me outside ohf Chermany, and I will never

vind von other so goot," and the tears rained down the heavy anxious face of Gretchen Schauffler.

"Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things," said the minister reflectively as he took his last look at the pale coffined form.

On the train that came into the village just half an hour before the funeral Kirsty's brother from Toronto arrived. He was a portly, congested looking man, wearing a large ring on his little finger, and carrying a gold-headed cane. He had attained to the height of his father's ambition and now wrote M.P. after his name.

The quiet people, however, among whom he was born needed but one glance into his face to know that he had sacrificed everything else in the attainment. They were a people not given to expressing their thoughts very freely, but Granny Nielson, after she had looked at him steadily for three minutes, said reflectively—louder than she intended—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

"Why, Granny," said Mrs. McTavish, who had overheard the reflection, and was slower

of comprehension than usual, "ye canna call his soul lost, he's livin' yet."

"Ken ye not," said the elder woman, "that there are plenty o' lost souls wanderin' 'round this world? "Plenty," she added after a moment, "who ha' sold their birthright for a mess o' pottage."

The M.P. looked bored all the time, as if he felt it a great nuisance to have had to come at all, and left on the first train after the funeral.

They buried Kirsty—and there never was a larger funeral in the village—in the sunniest corner of the small cemetry, where wild violets grew thickest in the spring, and where the children came in groups to pick them.

Scarcely a week had passed by, when one morning at the railway station I saw a bronzed bearded man step from the newly-arrived train. He was well dressed and prosperous looking, yet an indefinable expression of his face would lead the thoughtful observer to conclude that somehow he had missed the joy of life. No one seemed to know him, and ignoring the village bus which was waiting there to convey strangers to the hotel, he struck across country in the direction of Kirsty's cottage.

His imperative knock was answered by the Village Helper, who was assisting Mrs. McTavish and Kirsty's nieces in the sad work of dismantling the old home.

"Does Kirsty McAlister live here?" inquired the stranger.

"No," returned the Village Helper shortly, her face perceptibly growing harder, for although she did not recognize the face, as soon as she heard the voice she knew it to be that of Colin McEwen.

"Where does she live?"

"She is moved to a mansion."

"A mansion!" repeated Colin. "How did she get a mansion?"

"There was one specially prepared for her," replied the Village Helper, "an' if ye want to hear more about it jest read the fourteenth chapter o' John." And she was shutting the door in his face when he put out his hand and held it open, saying huskily, while he leaned heavily against the jamb of the door:

"Ye don't mean to tell me Kirsty's dead?"

There was something in his face which affected even the Village Helper, and she said, "Come into the house an' take a chair, it'll be a sight more comfortable than leanin' agin that

there doorpost ; an' Mrs. McTavish will tell ye the particulars."

"I never could think ill o' Colin McEwen again after seein' how bad he felt o'er Kirsty's death," Mrs. McTavish said to me the next day. "He confessed he was now a rich man—had spent the years gatherin' riches, not noticin' how time was flyin'. He had made up his mind to come back for Kirsty, nieces an' all, an' carry 'em all back to Australia with him, but, ah me! he came to find another Bridegroom had claimed his Kirsty."

"It was all owin' to my Scotch obstinacy," he said over and over again to me in the privacy of the room, with the door shut. "Ah! 'twas a terrible sight," she added after a short pause, "to see his grief and repentance."

Colin put a Scotch granite tombstone over Kirtsy's newly-made grave—"the most expensive stone in the burying-ground," Mrs. McTavish proudly informed everybody. The day after it was erected he went back to Australia.

"It is his intention to come home in his last days, the Almighty permittin' him, so he'll be buried by Kirsty's side," said Mrs. McTavish. "I ken that by some hint he dropped. . . . . Ye notice yon space on the granite stone?

Well, that's fer his own inscreeption. He didna just exactly tell me so, but I have ma own reasons fer thinkin' it. Ah me!" she sighed, "there's na use 'n tryin' to feenish the story here, na use."